

REFRAMING “FOOD DESERTS”: THE HISTORY OF URBAN
SUPERMARKET ACCESS AND ITS PUBLIC POLICY DISCOURSE

by
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ABSTRACT

Background: Though supermarket access features prominently in the public health literature and may help explain diet-related health disparities in American cities, there is scant literature on the history of supermarket access or its prior public policy discourse. The dominant frame to understand unequal food access in American cities – the “food desert” concept – is based on a causal narrative of urban economic decline. However, the “food desert” narrative in its focus on economic status cannot account for the lack of quality supermarkets in black urban areas, independent of income.

Objective: This dissertation research interrogated the assumption within the “food desert” frame that poor food access in low-income and racially segregated neighborhoods today is a product of economic decline. Rather unequal food access may be an on-going condition in low-income and racially segregated neighborhoods. As such, urban supermarket access is likely to have been contested in public policy prior to the current framing of the problem.

Methods: This research used a parallel mixed methods design, incorporating complimentary empirical and interpretive methodologies. First, historical supermarket data from Brooklyn, New York were used to identify supermarket and neighborhood socio-demographic trends that occurred between 1970 and 2010 (Aim 1). Supermarket retail data were derived from Dun & Bradstreet and the Yellow Pages, and joined with neighborhood-level data from the U.S. Census. Second, a policy discourse analysis uncovered the prior public policy discourse on urban supermarket access, using documents generated by the supermarket industry, consumer advocates, and civil rights

groups between 1960 and 1999 (Aim 2). Documents were located from online databases (ProQuest History Vault, ProQuest Congressional, and ProQuest Central) and in the archives of a major supermarket lobby organization, the Food Marketing Institute.

Results: The number of supermarkets declined in Brooklyn, New York between 1970 and 2010. Black and higher poverty areas had consistently higher ratios of person per supermarket than white and lower poverty areas. Between 1970 and 1990, white and lower poverty neighborhoods lost on average more stores than black and higher poverty neighborhoods; findings from the discourse analysis corroborate this description of which areas experienced supermarket closure. Supermarkets in predominantly black urban areas were consistently described as dirtier, more crowded, higher priced, and lower quality than stores in white areas; the lack of quality foods and higher prices in black neighborhoods was considered a problem of economic justice and posed a risk for hunger. Though the poor conditions of grocery shopping in black urban areas remained relatively stable over the study time period, the political discourse about urban grocery demonstrated a clear shift away from concerns about the problems of consumers in racially segregated and exploitative markets, towards concerns about the problems of businesses operating in poor urban areas. Accompanying the shifting problem frame was a diminished critique of the role of capital and racism in creating the marketplace for food in black urban neighborhoods; the supermarket industry, accused of profiteering from the spatially isolated poor in the 1960s and 1970s, repositioned itself in the 1980s and 1990s as an integral partner in urban economic redevelopment and health.

Conclusions: The findings from this mixed methods research challenge the assumptions and the adequacy of the “food desert” frame in promoting equity in the marketplace for

food. First, the “food desert” narrative claims that unequal conditions today are the product of supermarket migration, implying that prior to migration there was parity in supermarket access in the city. Yet both the empirical and discourse analysis provide evidence that urban supermarkets closed from white and more affluent neighborhoods; there is no evidence that black neighborhoods had either parity in access to supermarkets or in the quality of local supermarkets at any time during the study period. Second, the “food desert” decline narrative is used to promote supermarket reinvestment policies aimed at improving health and spurring urban economic development; such a policy ignores the role of racism in creating inequalities and therefore cannot address root causes of unequal food access. Neoliberal policies such as supermarket redevelopment try to improve well-being through expanded options in the marketplace. This study suggests the need to reframe urban food inequalities through the lens of racism, capital, and policy, and to rearticulate the role of government in protecting the rights of citizens rather than facilitating the choices of consumers.

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DEDICATION

“To live in this world

*you must be able
to do three things:
to love what is mortal;
to hold it*

*against your bones knowing
your own life depends on it;
and, when the time comes to let it go,
to let it go.”*

Mary Oliver

I dedicate this dissertation to my father. Daddy, you live on in me.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1-1 Overview

There is a wide literature, both scholarly and popular, on the problem of unequal access to supermarkets in urban neighborhoods. One framing of the problem that has political currency today is the notion of a “food desert”¹ – a neighborhood with little access to nutritious and affordable groceries (Beaulac, Kristjansson, & Cummins, 2009; Dubowitz, Ncube, Leuschner, & Tharp-Gilliam, 2015; Shaw, 2006; Ver Ploeg, 2009).

“Food desert” conditions are most likely to be found in neighborhoods that are predominantly black or low income; the relative lack of healthy and affordable food in those neighborhoods may help explain the alarming racial and class disparities in health conditions related to how we eat (Diez Roux & Mair, 2010; IOM, 2009; Viola et al., 2013). Scholars attribute food access disparities today to the exodus of supermarkets from the inner cities that occurred in the 1960s and 1970s, a time when middle class households were leaving cities for the suburbs, industrial jobs relocated from the urban core, and the concentration of poverty increased dramatically in central cities (Eisenhauer, 2001; Odoms-Young, Zenk, & Mason, 2009; Walker, Keane, & Burke, 2010). The “food desert” causal explanation rests on a narrative of decline that focuses on macroeconomic

¹ Throughout this dissertation I put “food desert” within quotes to make explicit my argument that a ‘food desert’ is merely a frame that was constructed by activists and academics to describe real world phenomena. To refer to areas as food deserts without reference to its constructed nature may reify the term as a real thing that exists. Furthermore, I argue that the conditions the term attempts to capture are actually epiphenomenal, and the phenomena that ought to be studied are the systemic forces of institutional racism and American political economy. Placing ‘food desert’ in quotes highlights its epiphenomenal character.

structures and demographic shifts. Food policy and public health advocates have successfully used this causal narrative to support government policies that reinvest in blighted urban business districts and incentivize new grocery development (Giang, Karpyn, Laurison, Hillier, & Perry, 2008; Holzman, 2010; Karpyn, Young, & Weiss, 2012).

The present study combines interpretive and empirical methodologies in an exploratory investigation of how supermarket access and its policy discourse have changed over time in American cities. What motivates the present research is first, a historical sense that unequal conditions for poor and black Americans are prior and ongoing features of urban life in the United States. “Food deserts” (or, more specifically, the unequal conditions the term intends to capture) may not be a product of decline, but rather a systematic feature of American political economy and racial hierarchies. And second, that most, if not all public health disparities exist in some historical, institutional, and ultimately political context. This study aims to contribute to a body of public health literature that investigates how public health problems have been socially and politically constructed, and suggests the value of historicizing public health problems through both empirical and interpretive methodologies.

1-2 The Ecological Argument: Food Access and Health Disparities

For at least the previous two decades public health research has widely adopted an ecological approach to help explain the rising rates of obesity and disparate prevalence across income levels and racial and ethnic populations (Black & Macinko, 2008; Diez

Roux & Mair, 2010; Shannon, 2014; Swinburn, Egger, & Raza, 1999). This shift signaled to many a needed advancement from explanations for obesity that centered on individual behavior and self-control; instead, an ecological approach hypothesizes which aspects of our living environments inhibit or promote healthy eating and physical activity behaviors, thus affecting risk for obesity through ‘energy balance’² (Brownell, 2005; Brownell et al., 2010; Hill & Peters, 1998; Pearl & Lebowitz, 2014). The body of literature on neighborhood environments and health has consistently demonstrated troubling differences in living conditions by race and class in American cities - poor and black urban neighborhoods have fewer amenities thought to promote healthy behaviors, such as supermarkets and public spaces for active play (Morland, Wing, Diez Roux, & Poole, 2002; Odoms-Young et al., 2009; Wolch, Byrne, & Newell, 2014; Zenk et al., 2005), and more neighborhood features that are thought to promote obesity, such as fast food restaurants and unsafe streets (James, Arcaya, Parker, Tucker-Seeley, & Subramanian, 2014; N. O. A. Kwate, 2008; Sallis et al., 2011).

Some studies have found living near a supermarket to be associated with improved dietary quality (Morland, Diez Roux, & Wing, 2006), though to date the body of literature for the affect of neighborhood food outlets on diet and specific health outcomes is mixed: other studies show no association between features of the food environment thought to contribute to poor diets and outcomes – such as fast food restaurants, or those that are supposed to contribute to a healthier diet – such as supermarkets (An & Sturm, 2012; Caspi, Sorensen, Subramanian, & Kawachi, 2012). Diet and health is, after all, complicated, and the presence or absence of certain types of food outlets are generally acknowledged by researchers taking an ecological approach as

² Energy balance refers to the balance between calorie intake and output through diet and exercise.

only one factor among many that affects relevant health behaviors and outcomes (Glanz 2004, Brownell).

The “food desert” frame emerged in the late 1990s as a shorthand way to describe such areas where healthy food retailers, such as supermarkets, are scarce and local dietary behavior might be poor and insufficient as a result (Beaulac et al., 2009; Cummins & Macintyre, 2002; Gordon et al., 2011; Russell & Heidkamp, 2011; Ver Ploeg, 2009). Concern over the public health impacts of such areas have galvanized governmental and non-profit action to systematically define, measure, and design policies and programs to eliminate them (Giang et al., 2008; Karpyn et al., 2012; Shaw, 2006). Though action to improve community food security³ takes many forms, efforts to eliminate “food deserts” center on increasing access to healthy food through building supermarkets and large grocery stores that provide access to fresh and high quality products (Giang et al., 2008; Holzman, 2010; Karpyn et al., 2010).

1-3 Critical Perspectives on the Ecological Approach and the “Food Desert” Frame

Other scholars, typically those using critical, interpretive or historically minded approaches have leveled critiques against the “food desert” frame and identified the ways it might be either misleading and counterproductive (Colls & Evans, 2013; Guthman, 2012; LeBesco, 2011; Shannon, 2014). Many question the hypothesis that food access in poor and black neighborhoods has a causal relationship on diet-related health conditions,

³ As defined by a leader in the community food security movement: “Community food security (CFS) is a relatively new food security-promoting strategy that considers all the factors within a region or community’s food system that influence the availability, cost, and quality of food to area households, particularly those in lower income communities.” (Winne, 2005)

particularly obesity (Guthman, 2013b). Shannon and others argue that these supposedly health promoting amenities (e.g., parks and bike lanes, farmers markets and supermarkets) are essentially features of a middle class landscape – and there is scant persuasive evidence to suggest their presence actually produces good health (Guthman, 2011; Shannon, 2014). A counter-explanation is that poor and racialized households, which are more likely to experience poor health due to the embodied effects of poverty and racism, live in neighborhoods with few amenities because of real estate steering practices or a lack of housing mobility to leave for higher resourced areas (Guthman, 2011; Sanders, 2012).

Policies that prioritize the recreation of these ‘healthier’ spaces within poor communities may inadvertently spur gentrification and the displacement of the poor to other high poverty, low resourced neighborhoods (Shannon, 2014; Thibodeaux, 2015). Furthermore, focusing on modifiable aspects of the neighborhood to explain health disparities precludes a research and policy agenda that prioritizes what some epidemiologists call *societal determinants of health*⁴ – a study of how social inequality and racial hierarchies affect both the embodied health of populations and create the environments that they live in (Krieger, 2011). Critical scholars are not optimistic that modifying environments without challenging structural inequality could improve health in fundamental ways (Chaufan, Yeh, Ross, & Fox, 2014).

A related body of critique problematizes the dominant framing of obesity within public health literature (Colls & Evans, 2013; Evans, 2006; Guthman, 2013a). This

⁴ In response to a perceived narrowness of a *social* determinants perspective, some epidemiologists refer to *societal* determinants instead. Rather than focus on the effects of social environments on health, a societal perspective encompasses inquiry into political economic structures that create social environments, revealing the power and privilege of some who may benefit from those structures at the expense of the health and well-being of others (Krieger, 2011).

scholarship challenges assumptions that conflate size and health and critiques measurements used to construct the obesity epidemic (Evans, 2006; Guthman, 2013a). Furthermore, some scholars argue that the framing of the problem, even within the ecological approach, unintentionally reinforces pernicious racial and class stereotypes and perpetuates harmful stigma among vulnerable groups (Colls & Evans, 2014; Guthman, 2009; LeBesco, 2011). They argue that the moral panic about the societal burdens of obesity and the public recital of obesity disparities among the poor and racial minorities “prompts the public to perceive obese minorities and information about the racial demography of obesity through a readily available filter they have previously used to process information about poor blacks and the racial demography of welfare receipt” (Sanders, 2012). Therefore, rather than seeing fat bodies as a reflection of unequal and racialized social arrangements, many in the public perceive fat bodies as having a lack of self-governance with the potential to ‘drain’ the state (Firth, 2013; N. Kwate & Threadcraft, 2015; Sanders, 2012). An ecological approach is a significant advancement in theorizing why unhealthy dietary practices have changed over time, as it shifts causal explanations for obesity from individual failure to the effect of harmful environments. However, critics argue that an ecological approach maintains a focus on behavior and how it can be properly governed through environmental modification, rather than emphasizing a need to disrupt the societal structures that systematically exposes racial and class groups to environments that may harm health (Shannon, 2014).

1-4 Study Description: Historicizing the Problems of Urban Food Access

The present dissertation research builds on the collection of literature that has taken a critical, historically minded, and interpretive approach to urban food access disparities and public health. This study historicizes the public health problem of urban food access, first by testing whether and how urban supermarket access declined in the time period suggested by the “food desert” causal narrative and second by uncovering prior policy discourse on the issues surrounding supermarket access in American cities. The rationale behind this parallel mixed method approach is a hypothesis that the conditions which the “food desert” frame attempts to capture (unequal access to high quality food between urban populations) may in fact be a prior an ongoing feature of urban life for poor and racialized groups. Thus, prior to the current framing and modern concerns about obesity, supermarket access was most likely subject to public policy debate between interest groups with differing views on the problem and its appropriate remedies.

To borrow a phrase from Sawicki and Moody, as the problem is defined, so goes the design of the solutions (Sawicki & Moody, 1996). The interpretive approach used in this study is grounded in the literature of postpositive policy analysis, which demonstrates how political actors compete over defining the nature and scope of public policy problems and their solutions (Clemons, 2009; Fischer, 2003; Stone, 1997). These scholars assert that problems do not exist objectively “out there” waiting for an analyst to discover, but are socially constructed by political actors with a stake in its definition (Stone, 1989). For example, since “food deserts” are explained as products of years of disinvestment and abandonment, policy advocates have fought for government subsidies to prompt reinvestment in neighborhoods where supermarkets would not otherwise be

built through the private market (Karpyn et al., 2010). Such incentives for supermarket redevelopment have been successfully enacted at the local, state, and federal levels (Giang et al., 2008; Holzman, 2010). They may include financing packages, tax abatements, and technical coordination among relevant local agencies to move development projects along efficiently and quickly (Karpyn et al., 2012).

These projects, proponents argue, will improve health and economic vitality in blighted neighborhoods – essentially reversing the narrative of decline and deterioration found in the “food desert” causal story. However, there may be alternative problem definitions that construct the issues of supermarkets in the city through radically different frames, and in doing so brings different normative concerns and empirical evidence to both academic and public debate on the issue (Guthman, 2011; Kurtz, 2009; Thibodeaux, 2015). Guthman identifies mainstream obesity and environment research as a “text book case of problem closure in which a specific definition of a problem and socially acceptable solutions are used to frame the study of the problem’s causes and consequences” (Guthman 2013). This research may help reduce problem closure within this field, and provide historically informed ways of reframing the problem.

The primary aim of this dissertation is to conduct a historical discourse analysis of documents produced by stakeholders to identify how various discourse coalitions constructed the “problem” of supermarkets in the inner city between 1960 and 1999. The absence of urban supermarkets constitutes a public policy problem today, yet to my knowledge there is no modern scholarship on how different interest groups perceived and responded to supermarket operating conditions or closures at the time they were occurring. Several questions remain, including: what reasons did the supermarket

industry give for why they could not successfully operate in inner city neighborhoods? Did they ask for government assistance? Which groups were affected, and how did they identify what was wrong with the system of urban grocery? Who did they blame for creating the problem? Did they advocate for any relief through policy? To fill these gaps in the literature, this research examines how the different stakeholders in the policy discourse over supermarket operations in the inner city defined the social problem at stake, identified who or what was the cause of it, and advocated for what ought to be done.

Furthermore, an interpretive approach deconstructs the frames used by stakeholders in their problem definitions to communicate tacit meanings and embed normative concerns in their policy recommendations. Problem definitions are constructed with language and typically expressed by political actors through policy narratives as either stories or arguments. The stories told by political actors are not neutral statements of fact; rather, they are meant to influence the policy debate and promote a course of action favorable to their interests (Stone, 1989). Deborah Stone writes, “problem definition in the polis is always strategic, designed to call in reinforcements for one’s own side in a conflict” (Stone, 1997). Embedded within these narratives are rhetorical techniques that frame the problem as one thing rather than another, and that tap into implicit cultural beliefs and norms (Schön & Rein, 1994). To describe a neighborhood without a supermarket as a “food desert” is one such act of framing, using the rhetorical technique of a metaphor, which evokes an image of barrenness. The framing of retail desertification could potentially be read as a coded way to imply a lack of stewardship from within urban communities, particularly when contrasted with the framing of the

“garden cities’ movement as it unfolded in the U.S., wherein racially exclusive suburban communities were planned as refuge from the disorderly and unhealthy city (McClintock, 2011). Regardless of whether the “food desert” metaphor implies decline, the metaphor certainly implies the need for revitalization.

The purpose of the discourse analysis is to first uncover the various problem-solution constructions offered by various interest groups, and to then deconstruct the language used to identify the embedded frames, assumptions, and values therein. Schon and Rein call for a “frame-critical policy analysis” since the frames strategically employed in problem definition “determine what counts as a fact and how one makes the normative leap from facts to prescriptions for action” (Schon and Rein, 1994).

A secondary aim of this study (presented first in the Results chapter) is to empirically test a tacit narrative implication of the “food desert” causal narrative – that unequal access to supermarkets today is the product of decline rather than a steady feature of urban life for poor or black inner city populations. The causal story for urban “food deserts” focuses on increasing economic segregation and concentration of poverty following decades of decline as the explanation for the dearth of supermarkets in American cities.⁵ Yet, today there is ample evidence that black neighborhoods have fewer community amenities, whether it’s banks or supermarkets, than white neighborhoods with similar income levels. How are scholars to interpret disparities in supermarkets access in the inner city, given what we know about which neighborhoods

⁵ See, for example the explanation for unequal access found within: Ver Ploeg M., Breneman V., Farrigan T., and et al. 2009. *Access to Affordable and Nutritious Food: Measuring and Understanding Food Deserts and their Consequences: Report to Congress* USDA Economic Research Service. “Economic theory can help explain why some areas may have limited access. Consumer behavior and demand-side issues, such as lack of knowledge of the nutritional benefits of foods or food retailer behavior, and supply-side issues, such as different fixed costs for developing a store in an underserved area, may explain variation across areas in the types of foods offered and the stores that offer them. Further research is needed to determine which factors may be driving differences in access.”

and populations are most affected? The lack of supermarkets in the city today may be a product of naturalistic economic decline, which disproportionately harms black Americans through the artifacts of segregation, as the “food desert” causal story explains. Or perhaps, since black Americans today are less likely than their white counterparts to live near a supermarket independent of income, this inequality may reflect a prior and ongoing system of racial inequality in the United States. An empirical test of this narrative within the “food desert” concept may lead to a reassessment of the adequacy of the frame both as it constructs the problem and operationalizes the measurement.

The causal story used to explain the emergence of urban “food deserts,” as many anti-racist food advocates contend, does not incorporate the history of discriminatory government policies and racist social practices in either limiting the ability for black Americans to generate personal wealth, acquire fair housing, or participate in the mainstream economy as equal and fully protected citizens (ACLU, 2012). Such a problem construction, perhaps based on an inadequate causal story, has consequences for the utility of the “food desert” frame in identifying either root causes or current incarnations of unequal states. This is evident most clearly in how the “food desert” frame was operationalized by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in the 2008 Farm Bill, which used a composite of area-level poverty and distance to the nearest full-service supermarket to signify whether a census tract is considered a “food desert” or not. This important metric, used to direct funding opportunities for reinvestment projects across America, cannot identify any differences in supermarket access by racial composition or other socio-demographic factors other than poverty. Using the federal

metric, by definition “food deserts” cannot exist in non-poor black neighborhoods, since low area-level poverty is one of the criteria necessary to identify such a census tract.

The empirical aim questions whether black Americans ever had equitable access to supermarkets in American cities. The hypothesis of this study is that historically, as today, supermarkets were more likely to locate in white neighborhoods than in black neighborhoods. This research uses historical business and socio-demographic data from the borough of Brooklyn measured decennially at five time points between 1970 and 2010 to test this hypothesis in one metro area.

1-5 Research Questions and Specific Aims

The two research questions that guide this study are: (1) How have urban supermarket locations changed over time relative to predominantly black or high poverty areas? (2) How did various interest groups construct the public policy “problem” of inner city supermarkets and how did those constructions lead to alternative policy proposals?

The study is guided by two specific aims to answer the research questions:

Study Aim 1: Examine supermarket and socio-demographic trends of Brooklyn, New York (1970 to 2010).

1.1 Describe the key socio-demographic and supermarket retail trends that occurred in Brooklyn, New York (1970 to 2010).

- 1.2 Calculate how persons per supermarket differed by area socio-demographic characteristics at each time period (1970, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010).
- 1.3 Identify the socio-demographic characteristics of areas that gained or lost supermarkets between each decade (1970-1980; 1980-1990; 1990-2000; and 2000-2010).

Study Aim 2: Examine how stakeholders constructed the conditions of supermarkets in the inner city as a public policy problem amenable to policy solutions through a discourse analysis of texts produced by various interest groups (1960-1999).

- 2.1 Identify the alternative problem definitions within the public policy discourse on supermarkets in the inner city.
- 2.2 Identify the public policy solutions generated by the alternative problem definitions.
- 2.3 Interpret the strategic use stories, arguments, facts, cultural beliefs, or symbolic representation to communicate meaning within policy narratives.
- 2.4 Examine how policy narratives evolved (or remained constant) over time as their “nested contexts” changed.

1-6 Research Rationale and Significance

The rationale behind this research approach is to situate the dominant urban supermarket access problem/policy construction of today in its discursive genealogy.

Doing so may accomplish several things. First, it introduces discourse policy analysis to the study of public health problems, a valuable but little used approach in a field dominated by positivist and empirical studies. Empiricism is a valuable tool to measure and describe natural and social phenomena, but empirical approaches cannot uncover social meaning, and public policy problems and politics exist in the realm of meaning and interpretation (Fischer, 2003). Our problem definitions lead us to asking certain empirical questions and not others, measure particular indicators and not others, and yet problem definition is contested, socially constructed, and embeds hidden norms (Stone, 1997). Discourse analysis can be used to bring to light those hidden norms and to identify the political actors and interests from whom those constructions arise (Schön & Rein, 1994).

Second, a discourse policy analysis uncovers the narratives, problem constructions and policy prescriptions of non-dominant interest groups and actors, as well as the values and assumptions embedded within their frames (Clemons, 2009). This is the policy relevance of such an approach – multiple problem definitions generate both new policy alternatives and new criteria by which to judge those alternatives. This aspect of discourse policy analysis is seen as its democratizing function – since some groups have more access than others (based on power and perceived legitimacy) to shape policy discourse, this type of analysis can uncover narratives and interests that have been marginalized in the policy debate (McBeth & Clemons, 1999). It also demonstrates the agency of marginalized groups in advocating for their version of the problem, and organizing and acting to address it through policies or practices that may not be acknowledged in the dominant discourse.

Third, this study historicizes the current discourse on the problems of and solutions to the urban food landscape and its effects on health by uncovering previous discourse and trends in urban grocery. American urban history in the 20th century provides evidence that poor and racialized communities have been denied fair access to food (and land) long before the obesity ‘epidemic’ drew public health attention to such unequal landscapes, and have been responding to it in innovative and community-oriented ways as long (Gordon Nembhard, 2014; Patel, 2011; White, 2011a, 2011b). Scholars have well documented the history of redlining home and commercial loans, the adverse impacts of slum clearance and ‘urban renewal’ programs, the problems associated with locating public housing projects mostly in black and poor neighborhoods, white fears of perceived black criminality, and attendant white violence against black people and property (Massey & Denton, 1993; Satter, 2009; Sewell, 2015; Sugrue, 2014).

Yet these critical, and some have argued foundational, elements to the story of urban investment and environmental justice remain largely absent from mainstream public health food access and policy discourses (Heynen, Kurtz, & Trauger, 2012; Thibodeaux, 2015; UCLA, 2012). Less well documented, and so even more absent from the mainstream discourse, has been the ways in which black communities have historically organized their efforts and resources to provide access to quality food at fair prices, whether by supporting black ownership, developing cooperative grocery stores and food buying clubs, or through placing political and economic pressure on food retail operators that they identified as discriminatory and unethical (Gordon Nembhard, 2014; Patel, 2011; White, 2011a).

Despite this knowledge residing in other disciplines, within public health there is little empirical investigation of the causes of “food deserts” or the policy discourse on urban grocery prior to the “food desert” frame while supermarkets were closing and presumably posed a public policy problem for urban consumers. This research begins to fill these gaps in the literature. Findings may contribute to the counter-narrative to the “food desert” frame generated by critical scholars, which reads unequal food landscapes and health disparities first as reflections of racism and political economy, neither of which figure prominently in the extant literature.

This research combines an interpretive approach (discourse analysis) with an empirical methodology (spatial analysis) to demonstrate how both approaches can be combined to answer different aspects of the same question. This approach is not meant to emphasize one approach over the other, but to assert that they occupy different roles in investigations of the social world and should be used in accordance with a specific need. Such a pragmatic mixed methods approach has been called a “parallel mixed design” (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2011).

1-7 Dissertation Organization

Chapter 1 of this dissertation monograph provided an introduction to the background and rationale of conducting the present research. Chapter 2 provides the key background literature on food environments and health, existing literature on the policies and practices that produced urban neighborhoods, and how those processes affect the market for food in American cities. Chapter 3 describes the methods used to identify and

analyze the data sources used in the discourse analysis, how the retail dataset was constructed, and the analytical strategy used to explore relationships between neighborhood characteristics and supermarket locations. Chapter 4 presents qualitative narrative results from the discourse analysis as well as results from descriptive and spatial analysis of the retail and neighborhood dataset. Chapter 5 identifies how the findings corroborate or challenge the existing literature, proposes the significance of results for future research and practice, as well as implications for policy formation, and explains the limitations of the research design.

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CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND

2-1 Overview

Since the 1990's, the escalating rates of obesity among children and adults has engaged the field of public health in a research and practice agenda to interrogate the extent of the problem, its causes, and how it might be solved. The immediate, or proximal, cause of excess body fat is typically framed in the literature as a problem of energy balance - an over consumption of calories compared with energy expenditure (WHO, 2015). Though this explanation has been called into question (Guthman, 2011), it guides population health research on why specific populations are more likely to be obese than others: why do some groups over consume calories and/or under-exert physical energy and others don't to the same degree? Over time, explanations for this imbalance have shifted from the individual – their education, cultural preferences, and will power, to the environments they live in – the types of foods that are affordable and available in a neighborhood, the safety of neighborhoods to walk for exercise or to access food, and so on (Brownell, 2005; Brownell et al., 2010). The shift to understanding “obesogenic” (obesity-promoting) features of our living environments has been viewed as a movement away from stigmatizing people and their personal behavior, and towards understanding how different living conditions affect the likelihood that populations will variously thrive or suffer (Brownell, 2005; Brownell et al., 2010; Guthman, 2012).

As such, creating health-promoting neighborhoods has risen as a priority for public health policy and research translation. One of the four overarching goals of

Healthy People 2020 was to “create social and physical environments that promote good health for all,” including neighborhoods with availability of resources to meet daily needs, such as local food markets (Koh, Piotrowski, Kumanyika, & Fielding, 2011). In order to do so effectively, epidemiologic research must first identify which aspects of our living environments are, in fact, health promoting and which might increase risk for disease. Among other neighborhood features, like parks and public safety, epidemiological research investigates the effect of living near or far from different types of food outlets (big chain supermarkets, farmers markets, convenience stores or bodegas, fast food restaurants etc.) on diet and health, largely through cross-sectional and ecological analyses (Caspi, Sorensen, Subramanian, & Kawachi, 2012; IOM, 2009; Laraia, Siega-Riz, Kaufman, & Jones, 2004; Wen & Kowaleski-Jones, 2012). This body of research identifies how low-income areas and black neighborhoods (independent of income) are exposed to significantly different everyday food landscapes compared with higher income and white neighborhoods (Casagrande, Whitt-Glover, Lancaster, Odoms-Young, & Gary, 2009; Li, Wen, & Henry, 2014; Odoms-Young, Zenk, & Mason, 2009).

Much of this research in the past decade has been framed using the concept of a “food desert” – an area with limited access to retailers that sell fresh and affordable foods (IOM, 2009). Though originally a more fluid concept, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) operationalized the term in the 2008 Farm Bill as a low-income/high-poverty census tract more than a mile from the nearest supermarket (Ver Ploeg, 2009). The standardized measure provides a way to evaluate success in improving low-access areas, though only supermarket development (or poverty reduction) could affect whether an area was still a “food desert,” by definition. In response, supermarket development

strategies have gained support and funding at all levels of government as a health promoting and obesity reducing policy solution. Supermarket redevelopment has been double billed by its proponents as an economic stimulus and a job creation strategy, in addition to improving health (Giang, Karpyn, Laurison, Hillier, & Perry, 2008; Karpyn et al., 2010). Proposals to intervene directly on poverty or income to reduce “food deserts” are not discussed in the literature.

While clearly galvanizing among advocates and policymakers, the “food desert” concept has been increasingly divisive among food policy advocates and critiqued among scholars (Redmond, 2009). Some critiques derive from empirical questions about whether such places exist and if they do, whether they really drive poor health and health disparities as hypothesized (An & Sturm, 2012; Lee, 2012). While the literature consistently demonstrates differences in access to healthy food retailers between population groups, the associations between access and diet or obesity have been generally weak and inconsistent (Dubowitz et al., 2015).

But another set of criticisms arise from scholars who reject the conceptual framing of “food deserts” and obesogenic environments entirely. This perspective challenges the “food desert” frame in its focus on obesity as the primary outcome of concern and the neighborhood environment as the primary level in which to ‘fix’ the problem (Guthman, 2011; Shannon, 2014). By focusing on how the environment shapes behavior (and policies to improve those environments), the “food desert” frame sidelines a more critical analysis of the role of political economy, urban history, and white supremacy in creating and perpetuating unequal environments, of which differences in food retailing is just one facet (ACLU, 2012). With those socio-historic issues under-

analyzed, there is a closure in the public discourse on what the problem actual is, and which type of policy strategy would be most appropriate to fix it (Guthman, 2011).

The purpose of this dissertation research is to use the historical record to contextualize our current discourse on inner city grocery access and to provoke an opening of this discourse in which history is taken seriously in public health theory, research, and policy translation on urban food access. Aside from a comparatively small group of critical scholars, there is little engagement with the discourse on urban supermarkets that preceded the field of public health's involvement in the last two decades and little empirical work that explores just how did grocery access change over time and for whom (Thibodeaux, 2016; Widener & Shannon, 2014). The present research will contribute to filling this gap in the public health literature.

This background literature review begins with an overview of the mainstream public health approach and findings on the problem of unequal urban food access and its policy responses. The following section reviews the scholarly critique of the mainstream "food desert" and obesogenic frames and their attendant policy implications. The next section presents an overview of urban history in the second half of the 20th century that contextualizes modern day food retail environments, focusing on policies and practices that produced concentrated and racialized housing immobility and poverty. The chapter closes with commentary on the public health policy and practice significance of the present research.

2-2 The Public Health Approach: Obesogenic Environments and Health Disparities

Diet-Related Health and Health Disparities

Public health researchers take an interest in the neighborhood food retail landscape because exposure to certain types of food outlets is hypothesized to affect dietary behavior and risk for chronic illnesses – particularly the obesity and alarming rates of type II diabetes across the US population (Moore, Diez Roux, Nettleton, & Jacobs, 2008; Morland, Diez Roux, & Wing, 2006; Papas et al., 2007). More than one third of American adults are obese and among subpopulations the rates are higher (Ogden, Carroll, Fryar, & Flegal, 2015). When adjusting for age, non-Hispanic African Americans have the highest adult obesity rates at 48.1%, compared with 34.5% among non-Hispanic whites (Ogden et al., 2015). Disparities in obesity are particularly high among women, with the prevalence among non-Hispanic black women at 56.8% compared to 35.5% among non-Hispanic white women (Ogden et al., 2015). Racial and ethnic disparities exist among children as well, with the highest rates of obesity among Mexican-American boys (26.8% compared to 16.7% among non-Hispanic white boys) and African American girls (29.2% compared to 14.5% among non-Hispanic white girls) (Ogden & Carroll, 2010).

Among individuals, obesity is a risk factor for several leading causes of morbidity and mortality, including cardiovascular disease, type II diabetes, stroke, and certain cancers (CDC, 2011b). Obese adolescents are more likely to remain obese as adults and experience increased mortality as young and middle aged adults (Biro & Wien, 2010). Obese children and adults face social stigma and discrimination that can affect mental health outcomes and career opportunities (Puhl & Heuer, 2010). There are societal

financial costs as well; obesity is associated with lower productivity compared with non-obese individuals and missed days from the workforce (CDC, 2011b).

Similarly, type II diabetes is a diet-related chronic illness of significant concern that disproportionately burdens the poor and certain racial and ethnic groups in the U.S. (Agardh, Allebeck, Hallqvist, Moradi, & Sidorchuk, 2011; CDC, 2011a). Diabetes is a leading cause of death (7th in 2007) and morbidity - including kidney failure, non-traumatic lower limb amputations and new cases of blindness (CDC, 2011a). Having diabetes may double the risk for death compared with people of a similar age without diabetes (CDC, 2011a). Non-Hispanic black adults are estimated to have nearly double the rate of diabetes (both diagnosed and undiagnosed) as non-Hispanic whites (CDC, 2011a).

High rates of obesity, diabetes, and other diet-related illnesses such as heart disease and stroke have brought attention to the contribution of the American diet to morbidity and mortality. There is evidence that few Americans consume the recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables, particularly nutrient-dense dark leafy greens (Dong & Lin, 2009), and eat in excess of refined grains and meats (Wells & Buzby, 2008). More evidence is needed to understand the connection between consumption of fruits and vegetables and specific health outcomes; however, they are thought to be preventative against certain chronic illnesses and cancers, as well as to be important for weight management (CDC, 2011c). Adults of higher income and greater educational attainment consume a higher quality diet than adults with lower income and lower educational attainment, although population-wide most American adults do not conform to daily-recommended values in most food categories (Dong & Lin, 2009).

Neighborhood Grocery Landscapes and Public Health Policy

The different food environments that populations are exposed to may help explain these observed disparities in diet and health. As such, public health research on place and diet aims to develop appropriate measures to capture features of neighborhood food environments that might affect behavior and health. Several indicators are used to measure the food environment, including mix and density of community-level food outlets (Shier, An, & Sturm, 2012); their spatial distribution across neighborhoods (Kelly, Flood, & Yeatman, 2011; McKinnon, Reedy, Morrisette, Lytle, & Yaroch, 2009); and the consumer nutrition environment, which includes measures of availability, cost and quality of foods within local stores (Kelly et al., 2011). Valid measurements are considered critical to assess the relationship between the food environment and health and to drive effective policy responses (McKinnon et al., 2009).

Using the concept of a “food desert” to describe poor food environments has had particular salience in both public discourse and academic inquiry. Originally used by community activists in the United Kingdom in the 1990s, it has gained currency as an evocative and motivating shorthand to describe neighborhoods with limited access to fresh and affordable healthy foods (H. Kurtz, 2013; Shaw, 2006). It has been used as a term with varying levels of specificity as to its definition since it was first introduced, ranging from a descriptive concept to an operationalized term (Beaulac, Kristjansson, & Cummins, 2009; Ver Ploeg, 2009). Despite the numerous ways in which food environments are measured in the literature, the concept of a “food desert” or an “under-served” neighborhood is commonly thought of as a neighborhood without a large grocery store or supermarket. Americans do the majority of household food shopping in

supermarkets or other large chain box stores such as Wal-Mart, where prices tend to be lower and selection more varied than smaller, independent merchants (Ver Ploeg, 2009). Supermarkets are therefore considered a good proxy for access to affordable and healthy food (Diez Roux & Mair, 2010).

In a study of unhealthy food environments commissioned by the U.S. Congress in the 2008 Farm Bill, the USDA operationalized the concept of a “food desert” as a census tract comprised of 20 percent or more by households under the poverty line and located more than one mile from the nearest supermarket in urban areas⁶ (Ver Ploeg, 2009). Here access is defined on two axes: the physical distance to a supermarket, a proxy for the availability of affordable healthy food, and area-level class indicators, indicating limited means of residents to travel outside the neighborhood to do grocery shopping or to buy healthier food that may be more costly. While the literature uses a variety of measures and demonstrates variation in specificity of the “food desert” concept over time, the USDA definition is a primary driver of government-led policy responses to eliminate “food deserts” as it directs available government funding for supermarket incentive programs (Widener & Shannon, 2014).

Measurement indices have been adapted in local contexts; for example, Baltimore uses a “food desert” measure that includes area-level vehicle ownership, while New York City uses an analogous metric called the Supermarket Need Index (BFPI, 2015; Smith, Goranson, Bryon, Kerker, & Nonas, 2011). Both indices retain the centrality of

⁶ Specifically the USDA definition is: “Census tracts qualify as food deserts if they meet low-income and low-access thresholds: 1. They qualify as “low-income communities”, based on having: a) a poverty rate of 20 percent or greater, OR b) a median family income at or below 80 percent of the area median family income; AND they qualify as “low-access communities”, based on the determination that at least 500 persons and/or at least 33% of the census tract’s population live more than one mile from a supermarket or large grocery store (10 miles, in the case of non-metropolitan census tracts)”.

supermarket proximity as a key measure of access and are used by city governments to drive and track policy responses for improving the food environment and health.

Epidemiologic Evidence on Food Environments and Populations

Public health epidemiologic literature on neighborhood retail food environments investigates how food outlets differ by community, and how that differential exposure may relate to diet and diet-related illness disparities across populations. This body of literature consistently demonstrates that Americans living in cities have significantly unequal exposure to types of food environments depending on area-level race, ethnicity, and class composition, leading to concerns about environmental equity and social justice (Beaulac et al., 2009; Hilmers, Hilmers, & Dave, 2012). Existing scholarship suggests that low-income neighborhoods have fewer supermarkets and chain stores, as well as an overall lower availability of healthier food options in area food outlets than more affluent areas (Chung & Myers, 1999; Giang et al., 2008; Glanz, Sallis, Saelens, & Frank, 2007; Karpyn et al., 2010; Morland, Wing, Diez Roux, & Poole, 2002; Powell, Slater, Mirtcheva, Bao, & Chaloupka, 2007). Studies have also demonstrated that predominantly black urban neighborhoods have a higher density of fast food restaurants and fewer supermarkets than white neighborhoods, after controlling for area-level income (Beaulac et al., 2009; Block, Scribner, & DeSalvo, 2004; Kwate, 2008; Lewis et al., 2005; Walker, Keane, & Burke, 2010). Additionally, food stores in predominantly black neighborhoods often offer less healthy and lower quality food items than similar types of stores in white neighborhoods (Franco, Diez Roux, Glass, Caballero, & Brancati, 2008; Hilmers et al., 2012).

It is less clear in the literature how differential food retail environments lead to differences in diet and health. At present there is not enough evidence to declare a causal relationship between “unhealthy” food environments and obesity, though there is evidence of associations between certain types of food retail access and specific diet and health indicators (Shier et al., 2012; Ver Ploeg, 2009). Studies have found that the presence of a large supermarket in a neighborhood is associated with higher fruit and vegetable intake and overall healthy diet, and greater density of ‘healthy’ retail outlets to be associated with reduced body mass index (BMI) and obesity (Laraia et al., 2004; Morland et al., 2006; Rundle et al., 2009; Zenk, Schulz, & Odoms-Young, 2009). One study found no associations between school and residential food environments and youth diet (An & Sturm, 2012). However, differences in measures of the food environment and research design limit the comparability between studies, and indicate a call for more both more robust and consistent measures.

There is also a need for more experimental studies that can lead to causal inference; the vast majority of research in this field is cross-sectional and ecological, and can therefore only identify associations. Thus far, studies using an experimental design demonstrate scant evidence that supermarket introduction will spur healthier eating and reduced weight. The first US quasi-experimental longitudinal study of the impact of a new supermarket in a “food desert” found no evidence that the presence of the market improved diet or BMI for area residents six months to one year after opening (Cummins, Flint, & Matthews, 2014). The study reported that one quarter of area residents had switched to using the new store as their primary shopping destination, suggesting that

more time, marketing, and complementary interventions may be necessary to see any affect on diet and health (Cummins et al., 2014).

A similar study in New York City found increased perception of healthy food availability following the new construction of a supermarket, but no measureable difference in diet quality or BMI (Elbel et al., 2015). The most recent study found improvement in some dietary habits in the area with a new supermarket, but those positive diet changes were not associated with being a regular shopper at the new store, leaving investigators to question how an improvement in neighborhood satisfaction might independently lead to changes in diet (Dubowitz et al., 2015).

Two older quasi-experimental studies in the United Kingdom measured fruit and vegetable consumption among area residents before and after the introduction of a new large supermarket. The first study, which lacked a comparison group, found positive, but modest impacts on diet (Wrigley, Warm, & Margetts, 2003); the second found no evidence for improved diet, and while it had a comparison group the response rate was extremely low – only about 15% of people initially recruited agreed to take part in the study (Cummins, Petticrew, Higgins, Findlay, & Sparks, 2005). Additionally, longitudinal data from a prospective cohort study of young adults found proximity to a supermarket to be unrelated to consumption of fruits and vegetables, contrary to expected findings (Boone-Heinonen et al., 2011). This study relied on fixed effects models; when the authors used multi-level modeling they found associations between supermarket and diet in the expected direction (Lehmann, Morland, & Godbold, 2012). As a whole, experimental studies of supermarket development have not borne out the positive effects

on diet that the ecological studies suggested might have been expected (Dubowitz et al., 2015).

The Grocery Gap: Public Health Theory for “Food Desert” Development

There is little research that documents how “food deserts” came to exist (Bitler & Haider, 2011; Thibodeaux, 2016). The dominant narrative reported in public health literature and food access advocacy reports is that “food deserts” are the product of a supermarket exodus from the inner-city that accompanied the out-migration of the middle class to the suburbs in the 1950s through the 1970s (Eisenhauer, 2001; Flournoy, 2010; Giang et al., 2008). There is evidence that supermarkets did close their locations in center cities in favor of more attractive suburban locations (Alwitt & Donley, 1997). Land-use policies and the reliance on personal vehicles in the suburbs created favorable conditions for the development of larger grocery stores on suburban tracts, just as the retail grocery industry was consolidating and relying on economies of scale – making suburban development more attractive (Eisenhauer, 2001). Eisenhauer argued that the suburbanization of food retail and concurrent concentration of urban poverty, often along racially segregated lines, signaled divestment from the ‘inner city’, and contributed to a “cycle of decline” that resulted in the unequal and unhealthy food environments seen across American cities today (Eisenhauer, 2001). Hawkes argued that it was the initial rise of the supermarket within urban areas that forced the closure of small, specialized food stores once dominant in city neighborhoods; so while the departure of supermarkets may have created “food deserts,” it may also have been their entry into city neighborhoods that set the vulnerable conditions in which “food deserts” would later emerge (Hawkes, 2008).

Few studies use historical retail data to document changes in urban food landscape over time. Two are from outside the United States, and their conclusions are not necessarily transferable to the US context. A study from the United Kingdom (UK) assessed changes in the food retail landscape and its associations with changes in obesity between 1980 and 2000 (Burgoine et al., 2009). The study found that while the overall number of food outlets increased by 79.4%, these changes were not associated with percent change in BMI in their study sample (Burgoine et al., 2009). There was no measurement of race or ethnicity of either the study sample or the composition of neighborhoods within the study.

The other longitudinal study, using data from New London, Ontario, measured the location of supermarkets in 1961 and again in 2005, finding that lower-income populations had less access to supermarkets in 2005 than they had in 1961 (Larsen & Gilliland, 2008). During the study time period supermarkets moved from locations in the central city to locations on the semi-suburban periphery, as did many high-income households. A conclusion of the study, set in a city with little racial or ethnic diversity, was that “food deserts are the result of structural and geographical changes in the business of grocery retailing over the past few decades,” echoing the predominance of market forces in the retail desertification narrative (Larsen 2008). Like the UK study, access was not measured for racial or ethnic groups, understandably, as a review of the literature demonstrated that outside of the United States there is little empirical evidence that supermarket access differs by neighborhood racial composition (Beaulac et al., 2009). This finding highlights the need to investigate how racial hierarchies work to produce

unequal living environments in American cities and the importance of integrating this history into our interpretation of environments, exposures and health disparities today.

Three American studies have used historical supermarket data to answer different research questions. The first study, similar to the aims of the UK study, examined the changing food retail landscape with population changes in obesity in four mid-sized cities in California; this study used data on supermarkets, small grocery and specialty food stores to measure the changing density of neighborhood food outlets from 1981 to 1990 (M. C. Wang, Cubbin, Ahn, & Winkleby, 2008). Findings demonstrated that concomitant with rising rates of obesity, the density of outlets serving less-healthy, more energy-dense foods increased over the study period. Another study documented the stability of the retail food environment, examining a five-year period of supermarket change in Brooklyn, New York (Filomena, Scanlin, & Morland, 2013). The authors found food retail was indeed dynamic, but that the level of fluctuation varied by race and class – higher income, predominantly white neighborhoods had the greatest supermarket stability in the study period (2007-2011) (Filomena et al., 2013).

The study of historical supermarket trends most relevant to the present research examined the association of supermarket locations with neighborhood poverty, income, and racial composition in nine US cities (Thibodeaux, 2016). The purpose of the study was to test whether there was continuity or discontinuity in which neighborhood characteristics predicted the presence of a supermarket between 1970 and 1990. As Thibodeaux noted, “food desert” research has not engaged with the historical process of neighborhood restructuring and how those processes affected the supermarket operations. The assumption in literature using an ecological model is that neighborhood effects on

supermarket locations would be stable over time – that is, the relationship between class and racial composition and supermarkets would be consistent (Thibodeaux, 2016). In contrast, Thibodeaux found that in 1970 supermarkets were more likely to locate in higher poverty and lower income zip codes, where as in 1990 the opposite relationship was true – supermarkets were more likely to locate in lower poverty and higher income areas (Thibodeaux, 2016); however, throughout the study period supermarkets consistently located away from African Americans.

These findings raise important questions about the reasons why the relationship between supermarkets and area poverty and income changed over time, but the relationship between racial composition and supermarket locations did not change. Thibodeaux suggested that changing perceptions of poverty during this time period, which reclassified the poor as unworthy, may have stigmatized poor areas in the perception of the grocery industry. Though not cited in the Thibodeaux study, elsewhere Martin Gilens (2003) demonstrated how prior to the mid-1960s images of the poor in America were typically white and sympathetic; between the mid-1960s and the 1990s the mass media increasingly portrayed the poor using images of African Americans and the associated stories became less sympathetic. Gilens argued that the black poor have been framed in the public as undeserving through these images and mass media stories (Gilens, 2003). Perhaps as the poor urban areas were more likely to be comprised of black households, the grocery industry ceased to consider those neighborhoods as worthwhile markets.

There is a clear need for more empirical work to identify how food landscapes have changed, for which populations, and why. One challenge of this research is

acquiring valid historical retail data. In the literature, food environment studies use business lists generated through in-person identification or ‘ground truthing,’ government lists, proprietary business lists, and/or public phone directories (Fleischhacker, Evenson, Sharkey, Pitts, & Rodriguez, 2013; Hosler & Dharssi, 2010). Each source for business data has its limitations: field data collection is time consuming and resource intensive; government records can be difficult to find and are location specific; proprietary lists can be prohibitively expensive; phone directories are incomplete and lack information on the scale of business operations (Paquet, Daniel, Kestens, Léger, & Gauvin, 2008; M. C. Wang, Gonzalez, Ritchie, & Winkleby, 2006). In an effort to standardize processes and improve the accuracy of lists, there is a growing literature on the validity and reliability of sources of business lists used in public health food environment literature (Bader, Ailshire, Morenoff, & House, 2010; Cummins & Macintyre, 2009; Hoehner & Schootman, 2010; Liese et al., 2010; Ohri-Vachaspati & Leviton, 2010). A recent systematic review on the subject suggests that the lack of a coherent and validated approach to retail data sources across studies may account for the mixed associations found between the food environment and health behaviors and outcomes (Fleischhacker et al., 2013).

Retail Development Policy Responses to Unhealthy Food Environments

Within public health, research and practice have converged around the concept of reintroducing supermarkets and other types of healthy food retail into poor and racially segregated neighborhoods to eliminate “food deserts” and mitigate their potentially harmful effects (Giang et al., 2008; Holzman, 2010). A policy of reinvestment fits neatly into the narrative of economic decline as a primary driver of food retail desertification.

This approach has an intuitive appeal; it is cast as both a catalyst for improving health outcomes and reducing health disparities, while reinvesting in neighborhoods that have seen decline, divestment, and marginalization (Flournoy, 2010; Holzman, 2010). It also clearly motivates policy. In 2009 President Obama called for the elimination of “food deserts” in seven years at the announcement of a \$400 million investment in a national Healthy Food Financing Initiative, which provided incentives for grocery store development in underserved areas through federal grants and technical assistance (Holzman, 2010). Similar projects geared toward the expansion of “healthy” food retail exist at the state and local level throughout the country (Giang et al., 2008).

The potential for economic development and employment makes this policy attractive to city governments. However, the literature is mixed on the impact of supermarket development on community vitality: grocery retail has been proposed as a neighborhood anchor that revitalizes the surrounding neighborhood, while other evidence suggests supermarket development threatens independent entrepreneurship and siphons money from the local economy (Cummins et al., 2005; Flournoy, 2010; Rubin & Taylor, 2008).

2-3 Scholarly Critiques of the Mainstream Public Health Frame

Critical scholars and anti-racist activists challenge the primary interpretations of the ecological approach and the “food desert” narrative just described, and identify the ways in which the framing of the problem and the policies it privileges may even be harmful to advancing the public good (Colls & Evans, 2014; Guthman, 2011; Redmond,

2009; Shannon, 2014; Slocum, 2006). One strand of the literature is critical of the way obesity is framed as a problem in the public health literature; scholars challenge the conflation of size and health and interrogate the ways in which the obesity epidemic narrative reinforces pernicious stereotypes about women, and women of color in particular, in the public imagination.

Another strand challenges the interpretations and attendant policy solutions that commonly derive from the ecological approach and its investigation of “obesogenic” environments. A central argument is that by focusing on neighborhood-level exposures (and therefore responding with neighborhood-level interventions), there is insufficient analysis of the structural and political roots that created unequal environments and sorted poor and racialized populations into them in the first place (Shannon, 2014). Such an analysis would broaden interpretations of the association between place and health, and so may lead to a diverse set of policy recommendations. Most commonly, the interpretation of the relationship between neighborhood features and the health or behaviors of the populations who live there is essentially unidirectional – the environment is thought to act on individuals (Guthman, 2013). Yet, context (neighborhood features) and composition (who lives there) has been referred to as a “false dualism” precisely because a place and its inhabitants are both entangled outcomes of historical processes (S. Cummins, Curtis, Diez-Roux, & Macintyre, 2007).

The racial and class composition of suburban and urban communities, and the “healthy” or “unhealthy” resources therein, are products of the racial hierarchies embedded in policies and practices of the last century. And so, the features of more affluent and white areas may reflect the health of its inhabitants as much as it produces

them. Replicating these features (supermarkets, parks, bike lanes etc.) in poorer or racially segregated communities may not produce better health, and cannot fundamentally address underlying structural inequalities (Guthman, 2013). What these scholars point us to is the importance of critically engaging with history to understand how places and populations are intimately related, and how that entangled relationship affects health and well-being.

Problematizing the Obesity Epidemic, its Frames and Claims

Public health researchers and policymakers frame the rising prevalence of obesity among children and adults in the US as an alarming trend with severe consequences for the nation's health and economy (Y. Wang, Beydoun, Liang, Caballero, & Kumanyika, 2008). Moreover, obesity is framed as an "epidemic," an emotionally charged term that is typically associated with infectious disease (Saguy & Riley, 2005). In response, critical obesity scholars and fat activists have challenged the construction of the epidemic narrative and the normative implications of such a frame. It is relevant to this research to the extent that the normative framing of obesity can (if unintentionally) reify in the public imagination racist and sexist assumptions about dysfunctional individual behavior rather than be read as an indictment of dysfunctional systems and social arrangements.

Critical obesity scholars contend that body size, or fatness, is reductively and often inappropriately conflated with health (LeBesco, 2011). There is increasing evidence that the 'overweight' category may not pose a higher risk for chronic illness than 'normal weight' persons (Flegal, Kit, Orpana, & Graubard, 2013). Additionally, not all fat poses

the same risk for illness and death. Visceral fat stored in the abdomen has been shown to elevate risk for illness and death compared with the more visible subcutaneous fat (Després, 2012; Gastaldelli, 2008; Oliveros, Somers, Sochor, Goel, & Lopez-Jimenez, 2014; Zhang, Rexrode, van Dam, Li, & Hu, 2008). Abdominal fat can be reported using waist circumference or a waist-to-hip ratio; studies have shown that the relationship between fatness and mortality is stronger using such measures compared with associations using BMI as the indicator for adiposity (Cepeda-Valery, Pressman, Figueredo, & Romero-Corral, 2011; Coutinho et al., 2011; Czernichow, Kengne, Stamatakis, Hamer, & Batty, 2011; WHO, 2008). Such evidence suggests epidemiologic studies ought to be more reflective in their use of BMI as a proxy for adiposity and more precise about how and when fatness increases risk for debilitating illnesses and death. Some have embraced a ‘health at every size approach’ to reduce stigma, protect against unhealthy dieting tactics, and to decenter fatness as the marker of diet-related health (as opposed to glucose control or cardiovascular fitness) (Robison, 2005).

Critical obesity scholars would go further to say that the framing of the obesity epidemic actually causes harm to fat people, and reifies societal biases about class, race and gender. Fatness is stigmatized in the US; fat people are discriminated against in employment, are assumed to be lazy and morally inferior, and are vulnerable to psychological and physical harm from such stigmatization (Colls & Evans, 2013; Puhl & Heuer, 2010). The stigma to fat people and assumptions about their moral fitness is indivisible in the US from other pernicious assumptions about class, race, and gender (Firth, 2013; LeBesco, 2011). People of color, the poor, and women are stereotyped as unable to self-govern their appetites and consumption, dovetailing with cultural

stereotypes that portray poor, black, and female bodies as undisciplined and a ‘drain’ on well-regulated citizens and the state (Firth, 2013; Sanders, 2012). A historicized approach to obesity and environment research could contribute to a discourse that interrogates fatness as a reflection of unequal gendered and racialized social arrangements, rather than a product of undisciplined bodies.

“Food Deserts,” Problem Closure, and Critical Geographies

Adoption of the social ecological theory in the public health obesity literature, which moves beyond individual health behaviors to analyze the effect of context on health and disease, is widely considered less stigmatizing than the prior paradigm (Brownell, 2005; Brownell et al., 2010; Hill & Peters, 1998; Swinburn, Egger, & Raza, 1999). It produced an important body of literature that documents environmental injustice as population groups are exposed to profoundly different life contexts. Yet, critics argue, refocusing attention to unhealthy living environments still aims to discipline behavior by “curing the environment,” representing an extended form of neoliberal governance over those who cannot or will not discipline themselves (Shannon, 2014). Such a frame is especially problematic when applied to low-income and racialized populations, who are often the subject of “food desert” research and who are already the target of damaging stereotypes about their moral fitness and capacity for self-control (Gilens, 2003; Hancock, 2004; Schram, Soss, & Fording, 2003). There are many critiques of the obesogenic/“food desert” frame – but they hinge on two indivisible lines of reasoning, the first being epistemic and the second being normative. Such was the case with the “problem” of obesity described above – critics challenge both the means of producing knowledge (how

do we define and measure obesity), and the social meanings of that knowledge (what fats signifies).

The “food desert” frame has led to what Guthman calls “problem closure” in the way we investigate, interpret the meaning of, and propose policy solutions for urban food landscapes, particularly in poor communities of color (Guthman, 2013). Problem closure occurs within a discourse when, “a specific definition of a problem is used to frame subsequent study of the problem’s causes and consequences, and thus precludes alternative conceptualizations” (Guthman, 2011). By focusing on features of neighborhoods that may promote or harm health, focus (in the form of empirical research, conceptualization, theory building) is diverted from the fundamental causes of those unequal conditions, which are rooted in history and politics (Kurtz, 2013; Sewell, 2015). The “food desert” frame, while using an historical narrative of economic decay described above, sidelines investigation into the role of power and politics in creating unequal conditions in American cities, of which the lack of supermarkets and the preponderance of cheap unhealthy food is just one facet (Kurtz, 2013).

How the problem is framed matters for the methods used to describe it, the interpretation of empirical findings, and the policies that are recommended based on the interpretations on empirical work. Moreover, defining the problem under study is a normative activity – it incorporates the values and biases of the researcher and the academic discourse to which they are contributing (Stone, 1997). The “food desert” frame, while largely successful in galvanizing public and policy attention to disparate living conditions for the poor in American cities, has not lead to a research and policy

agenda that interrogates and addresses the political economy of the food system and white supremacy in racializing poverty and place.

The problem and its causes remain by and large conceived of at the neighborhood level, and so policies and programs are also designed to ‘improve neighborhoods’ – whether via the supermarket redevelopment strategies described above or more grassroots community food projects like farmers markets, urban agriculture, and school lunch programs that incorporate local and fresh foods (Shannon, 2014). Some have argued that the “healthy” neighborhoods these policies and activities seek to create are essentially middle class, suburban landscapes – which is problematic because on the one hand, there is little evidence these policies will improve health and on the other, such neighborhood redesigns may simply promote gentrification and displace the poor to other less desirable places (Guthman, 2011; Shannon, 2014). Building a new supermarket in a poor urban neighborhood may provide easier access to affordable healthier foods than existed prior to its existence (as well as thousands of highly-processed food products), but it cannot alter the political economies and racial hierarchies that produced such a neighborhood without supermarkets, and likely the health disparities found therein.

Without changes in relationships and institutions that created unequal environments and conditions of poverty, there is little reason to be optimistic that modifying those environments can substantially improve health and reduce health disparities. Regarding the confounding effect of poverty on the association of active transport and childhood obesity (poorer kids are more likely to use active transport to school and are also more likely to be overweight) Chaufan and colleagues argue that: “children will not be able to ‘walk or bike themselves out’ of the health effects of poverty,

and that environmental changes alone, however positive, will neither eliminate nor substantially reduce its undesirable effect on health” (Chaufan, Yeh, Ross, & Fox, 2015).

There is need, therefore, to expand the frame used in public health discourse to conceptualize neighborhood food landscapes and diet-related health disparities as historical and political outcomes created by actors, institutions, practices and policies, (and thus identifying sites of intervention) as well as a need to decenter obesity as the problem to be fixed. In the words of Guthman: “The built environment reflects existing social relationships and political-economic dynamics, including racial and class patterns in size (fatness), more than it creates them” (Guthman, 2011). In the U.S., knowing the history of the city and of the ghetto is essential for analyzing unequal living conditions today, for hypothesizing how they might affect population health, and for identifying the policies that could fundamentally improve both.

2.4 Racialized Geographies and Concentrated Poverty in American Cities

Racial Residential Segregation and Health Disparities

Racial residential segregation has been identified as a “fundamental” driver of black-white health disparities (Williams & Collins, 2001). Williams suggests two pathways by which segregation leads to health disparities: indirectly by lowering the socioeconomic status of blacks living in segregated neighborhoods and directly by increased exposure to harmful living environments (Williams & Collins, 2001). The impact of segregation is not just that it sorts populations into different environments, but that segregation is a dynamic process that over time produces and reproduces

environments that constrain possibilities for health and wellbeing - while also leading to group political consciousness and social support that may engender resilience to such environments (Kramer & Hogue, 2009; T. A. LaVeist, 1993).

Kwate (2008) gives the most explicit treatment on how segregation both provides the conditions for, and makes durable over time, poor food environments in segregated black neighborhoods. She identifies four pathways by which segregation leads to higher fast food density in predominantly black neighborhoods: (1) population characteristics (concentrated blackness and poverty), (2) economic characteristics (retail environment and labor market conditions), (3) physical infrastructure (zoning and neighborhood features), and (4) social processes (neighborhood stigma and community political strength) (Kwate, 2008). Food store operators use such neighborhood characteristics to decide where to site their stores, and Kwate argues that the mix of conditions in predominantly black neighborhoods is attractive to fast food restaurants (Kwate, 2008). Elsewhere it has been argued that predominantly black urban neighborhoods provide a niche market for small convenience grocery stores, typically owned by other ethnic groups such as Jewish, Italian, and more recently Korean, merchants (Kim, 2000).

Using an innovative approach to understanding the role of neighborhood environment on health, the Exploring Health Disparities in Integrated Communities (EHDIC) study examined health outcomes by race in an integrated low-income urban neighborhood of Baltimore. Researchers found that expected black-white disparities seen in national studies in several illnesses were not present in their study sample, suggesting that living under the same neighborhood exposures leads to similar health outcomes (T. LaVeist, Pollack, Thorpe, Fesahazion, & Gaskin, 2011). The premise of the study is that

research on racial health disparities is biased if it does not take into account racial residential segregation, a primary mechanism by which populations are differentially exposed to potentially harmful living conditions and unequal opportunities (T. LaVeist et al., 2011).

The Formation of Racial Residential Segregation

It is impossible to make sense of urban food landscapes today without reference to the racialized policies and practices of suburban growth and urban dispossession. Today the “inner city” and the “ghetto” are popularly constructed in the (white) public imaginary as coded words to describe the neighborhoods where poor, black families live in American cities, and are laden with assumptions about inhabitants’ morality and relationships with the state (Hancock, 2004; Small, 2008). This stereotype demonstrates the continuing salience of the narrative that suburban growth and urban blight are the products of competition in a free market and that its effects demonstrate which groups had the grit and values to succeed, and which did not (Fernandez, 2016; Freund, 2010). Immigrants arriving to the U.S. in the first half of the 20th century, the forbearers of many suburban whites, are often used as proof for such a narrative – as the story goes they often came destitute, lived in tenements and slums within ethnic enclaves, worked in dangerous conditions, and acquired property through thrift and work ethic (Rieder, 1987).

What is lost in this popular narrative are the ways in which the state subsidized and encouraged whites to acquire property in the suburbs, thus helping new immigrant groups acquire ‘whiteness,’ wealth, and identity as moral citizens of the state (Freund, 2010; Douglas S Massey & Nancy A Denton, 1993). Federally insured mortgages, which developed from Depression-era programs to spur construction and the home finance

industry, were essentially only available to white buyers moving to all-white areas (Freund, 2010). Black homebuyers (and black neighborhoods) were not only denied access to federally insured mortgages - the entire system was premised on producing segregated, racially homogenous neighborhoods as a means to protect the property values of white homeowners (Freund, 2010). Redlining of federally-insured loans and lending discrimination by mortgage companies lead many black home buyers to accept abusive land contract deals in which the real estate agent (and often owner of the property for sale) bought homes at low prices from fleeing white families, and sold them at grossly inflated prices to incoming black families (Douglas S. Massey & Nancy A. Denton, 1993; Satter, 2009). Land contracts meant that the homeowners could be evicted for as little as being late on one payment – in this way, enterprising speculators and real estate agents exploited black housing and credit discrimination, and sold and resold inflated housing at unfair terms to black families (Douglas S. Massey & Nancy A. Denton, 1993; Satter, 2009).

Within the city, black families had long been segregated within racial ghettos in central cities at rates unknown among the ethnic immigrant enclaves due to restrictive housing covenants and the threat of white violence against families who crossed the neighborhood color line (Douglas S Massey & Nancy A Denton, 1993; Satter, 2009). Scholars differentiate ghettos from ethnic enclaves by the extent to which that segregation is voluntary – the ghetto refers to the areas where group mobility is involuntarily restricted by policy and practice (Gans, 2008). Migration of rural blacks from the South, combined with restricted housing choice for black households, lead to

overcrowding and slum conditions in many black urban neighborhoods in the immediate post World War Two years (Massey & Denton, 1993; Satter, 2009).

In the popular conception of the ‘ghetto’ there is a conflation of race and class, with the assumption that most households are poor in black urban neighborhoods – whereas predominantly black neighborhoods were, and remain, highly heterogeneous by class (Small, 2008). Fusfeld and Bates explain that while the racial ghetto might contain slum areas, they are certainly not coterminous (1984). New immigrants and black migrants often lived in slums - high poverty areas with overcrowded, deteriorated housing - but the racial ghetto contained households across the economic spectrum, restricted in place by racist policy and practice (Fusfeld & Bates, 1984). After the 1970s, as capital and commerce followed white flight from the city, the Northern and Rustbelt economy deindustrialized, and fair housing laws opened real estate to middle class black families, the racial ghettos of the inner city became more highly concentrated in poverty and more marginalized from the mainstream economy (Wilson, 2012).

Spatial isolation and the restricted mobility of black households was a profitable arrangement for landlords and other business interests that operated in black neighborhoods. Though little acknowledged, the interest in profiting from black social and economic exclusion is as important in explaining segregation as the racist policies and practices that achieved it. Merchants profited from segregated neighborhoods; Manning Marable referred to the preponderance of non-black business owners in black neighborhoods as a “white ethnic economic hegemony within the ghetto’s retail market” (Marable, 1983). In 1963, Caplovitz demonstrated that black households paid higher prices for durable household goods, and were the frequent victims of exploitative

merchants selling shoddy merchandise at unfair terms of credit (Caplovitz, 1963). The segregated housing market distorted supply; rents for housing of equivalent quality were higher in predominantly black areas, and sometimes black households with few alternatives paid higher rents than more affluent parts of the city all together (Baldwin, 1948; Sugrue, 1996). Satter and Connolly described the opportunities for the mostly white property owners and managers, real estate agents, and rent collectors to build wealth off of black housing immobility and lack of fair credit access (Connolly, 2014; Satter, 2009). Racial residential segregation is therefore not just a product of white racism, but a producer of white capital accumulation.

Racial residential segregation matters for health and wellbeing precisely because black urban segregation into racial ghettos is the product of racist, exclusionary policies, which created highly unequal marketplaces, living conditions and resources for wealth accumulation (Sewell, 2015). Housing immobility and discriminatory policies underdeveloped black communities, as it simultaneously facilitated the wealth (and health) accumulation of whites (Marable, 1983). Neighborhood effects studies try to differentiate between ‘context’ and ‘composition’ – what a place looks like and who lives there – but this history demonstrates the entanglement of the two in both black and white areas (Guthman, 2013). The spatial location of employment, potentially toxic land uses like bus depots or waste incinerators, or banks and supermarkets are intimately tied to the geographies of race in American cities (Kurtz, 2009). And so population health research must engage with the history and fact of segregation when investigating either the marketplace in black neighborhoods, or black-white health disparities.

The Ghetto and the Marketplace for Food

The marketplace for goods and services in black neighborhoods is shaped by racist state policies and discriminatory practices. Discrimination in the housing market and its relationship to racial residential segregation is well documented. Less well researched, but as Immergluck writes, “no less real,” is discrimination in access to fairly priced small business credit for blacks and Hispanics and within minority communities – which, of course, is intimately tied to the spatial concentration of racial and ethnic groups in American cities (Immergluck, 2004). In his work, *Credit to the community: Community reinvestment and fair lending policy in the United States*, Immergluck describes how “flows of private sector credit have been important factors in shaping the vitality and prospects of urban communities” (Immergluck, 2004). Evidence of racial and spatial discrimination in credit extends to today – black owned firms are twice as likely to be denied credit as white-owned firms and to receive smaller loans after controlling for various indicators of credit-worthiness, and firms in predominantly black census tracts receive fewer loans after accounting for neighborhood characteristics and credit quality of local firms (Immergluck 2004; Bates 1997; Immergluck 2002). Given the lack of access to traditional credit and housing markets and its impacts on intergenerational transfer of wealth, black business owners tend to be concentrated in service sectors requiring lower capitalization, such as personal services (Oliver and Shapiro 2006; Kim 2000; Immergluck 2004). In the post-Civil Rights era, rates of black business ownership has remained low, while equal opportunity laws facilitated an employment niche in the public sector for black workers where there was more protection from discrimination than

in either the private sector or business ownership (Immergluck, 2004; Kim, 2000; Sugrue, 1996).

It is within this context of black exclusion from small business ownership that other ethnic groups, often first generation immigrants, have been able to develop a niche of grocery store ownership in black neighborhoods. Immigrant groups may arrive both with more capital to purchase retail stores and an established network of store owners to facilitate business startup (Kim, 2000). For example, in recent decades after the first wave of Korean immigrants established the food retail niche in black and low-income neighborhoods, those who followed purchased Korean-owned stores as their prior owners trade up for higher status retail, such as dry cleaners, which provide better hours and less demanding physical work than grocery stores (Kim, 2000). Geographic redlining of loans means lower capitalized, smaller food retail formats are more likely in black neighborhoods (Bates, 1997), and store format tends to correlate with quality, price, and variety of produce and other grocery items (Ver Ploeg, 2009).

What has been clear since at least the early 1960s with the publication of *The Poor Pay More*, is that poverty and segregation allow for the creation of exploitative and unfair marketplaces (Caplovitz, 1963). Caplovitz demonstrated that the captive marketplace of the poor and their negligible access to fair credit made opportunities for merchants to charge higher prices than the same goods in wealthier areas, excessively high interest rates and to conduct deceptive sales practices with little fear of prosecution (1963). Since the 1960s researchers have consistently asked whether the poor also pay more for groceries, as residents and community activists long contended (Alcaly & Klevorick, 1971; Bell & Burlin, 1993; Chung & Myers, 1999; Goodman, 1968). A

consistent finding is that smaller independent grocery stores charge higher prices than chains, since they do not have the same economies of scale, and these stores are more likely to be located in low-income and racially segregated neighborhoods. An important follow-up question for research might be, why were there fewer chain supermarkets in low-income or in racially segregated neighborhoods?

Community Resistance to White Supremacy and Adaptation to Economic Exclusion

Control over land and access to food, while little recognized in public food access discourse, has long been a pillar of black resistance and self-determination in the face of white supremacy and state violence (White, forthcoming). From the era of slavery through today, black communities have pooled resources in mutual benefit societies, created agricultural land co-operatives and food co-operatives to provide access to food and the means to produce it, in response to an exclusive state and marketplace that denied safe and equal access (Gordon Nembhard, 2014). Today, the Civil Rights movement is largely remembered as a mobilization for equal protection under the law and equal access to public institutions; more sidelined in American cultural memory was the labor rights, anti-poverty, and hunger advocacy within the movement that focused on a rights to jobs, housing, and food (MacLean, 2008). A major strategy of the Black Panthers was a free-breakfast program that fed thousands of black school children across the US, in what they termed a strategy of “survival pending revolution” – that is, addressing the symptom (hunger) while fighting the disease (white supremacy) (Patel, 2011). Today, anti-racist food justice advocates continue that legacy in developing new co-operatives and using urban agriculture to assert control of food production and consumption, as an act of

political resistance to the racial state (Heynen, Kurtz, & Trauger, 2012; Kurtz, 2009; White, 2011a, 2011b).

Grocery, in particular, has historically been a site of political action and contestation, and remains so today, as food stores have long been recognized as a racialized space in black communities. Non-black grocery store owners in predominantly black neighborhoods have had a contested relationship with area residents given a history and perception of racism, charging higher prices, and providing lower quality products (Cannuscio, 2010). A study published in 1971 investigating food price difference in New York City in wealthy and poor neighborhoods, connected grocery prices and the civil rebellions that occurred throughout the 1960s, claiming: “resentment against alleged unfair commercial practices by ghetto merchants - most of whom are white - was one of the many grievances that have found expression in these disorders” (Alcahy and Klevorick 1971). Food retail, from small neighborhood grocery outlets to supermarkets, has been the site of boycotts by black neighborhood residents based on charges of discriminatory hiring practices and unfair race-based treatment of customers (AP, 1984; Chan, 2008; Foderaro, 1990).

A primary example is the Red Apple Boycott, lasting 16 months over 1991 to 1992, in Flatbush, Brooklyn in response to the alleged assault of a black patron by the Korean American storeowner. The media reported that the store boycott which followed was an eruption of “racial tension,” framing the political actions as an irrational and misdirected response from black residents against an upwardly mobile immigrant group (Kim, 2000). A scholarly investigation of the incident by Kim provides a political analysis of the boycott – arguing “when black collective action against Korean merchants

does arise, it does so as part of a longstanding tradition of black resistance to racial oppression in the name of ‘community control’” (Kim, 2000).

Unfair pricing and abusive treatment from non-black merchants has been a fixture of black life in the United States; in response, black communities have historically pooled resources to promote black business and consumers campaigns from “Don’t Buy Where You Can’t Work,” in the 1930s to “Buy Black” in the Civil Rights era and beyond (Kim 2000). Supporting black business is seen as an act of community survival, as resistance against the reliance on the provision of goods and services by an oppressive class, or by other marginalized ethnic groups able to enter business niches created by the spatial concentration and economic marginalization of blacks in urban neighborhoods (Kim, 2000; Immergluck, 2004). This history demonstrates that retail, and food retail in particular, has been and is now a racialized space in black neighborhoods.

2.5 The Gap in the Literature

The present study contributes to several important research gaps and attempts to alter the discourse on food access and health by placing it in historical and political context. It is not entirely clear how the food environment impacts health, but the food environment is clearly differential by class and race: poor communities and predominantly black urban neighborhoods often lack access to retail stores with high quality, healthy, affordable food. There is also evidence that the “food desert” concept has motivated policies geared toward developing new healthy food retail to address what is understood to be its primary cause – supermarket flight to the suburbs – and to act as a

catalyst for good health and economic opportunities in disadvantaged neighborhoods. Yet there is little research within the field of public health that examines the temporal development and racialized dimensions of urban food retail, when and how class and race interact or act independently in relation to neighborhood grocery, and its implications for effective and equitable policy (Thibodeaux, 2016; Widener & Shannon, 2014).

Addressing this gap in the literature is the primary contribution of this proposed research.

Supermarket flight may indeed be the proximal antecedent to “food desert” creation, but restocking urban neighborhoods with these large grocery stores will not address the fundamental causes that made (and remakes) the urban grocery landscape. First, it does not address the underlying policies that created unequal urban spaces, of which grocery is just one manifestation. Second, it does not acknowledge the probable role of supermarkets in the closure of smaller independent stores that may have served important community functions. This simple identification of problem and solution renders invisible how racialized urban policy and discrimination in lending markets have historically determined grocery operation and patterns of business ownership in black neighborhoods. In doing so, it additionally ignores a discourse on how retail ownership, particularly, in this case, grocery, has functioned in neighborhoods to create collective resilience (or susceptibility) to larger societal conditions and policies that shape the urban form. Advocates and researchers are then limited in applying that discourse to formulate a policy agenda moving forward to create healthier, more equitable, and sustainable urban neighborhoods. In this way, an historical investigation of food retail can open up channels of discourse not currently imagined.

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CHAPTER 3: METHODS

3-1 Overview of Methods and Study Design

This dissertation research uses a parallel mixed method design to examine the history of inner city supermarkets through both an interpretive and an empirical lens. Mixed methods research is common in applied fields like public health (Teddle & Tashakkori, 2011). Within parallel designs, researchers collect data using a variety of methodologies to answer different strands of the same question (Teddle & Tashakkori, 2011). This design proposes that data are collected concurrently, and findings from each analysis are integrated within the interpretation of the overall results (Creswell, 2003). Qualitative methods are well suited to answer questions of *how* and *why*, whereas quantitative methods are appropriate to measure questions of *how much*.

Geographic information systems (GIS) technology has now made it increasingly easy to also ask questions of *where*, augmenting the explanatory power of both qualitative and quantitative research. Spatial analysis is an essential dimension of public health research, particularly for understanding health disparities, because where different populations live, their clustering and dispersal, their exposures to toxins as their exposure to vital resources, is related to a groups' position in society, its history, and its health (Cromley & McLafferty, 2012). The present study combines these methodologies in an exploratory investigation of how supermarket access and its policy discourse has changed

over time in American cities, and will discuss the research, policy, and normative implications of such a history.

This research study begins with the hypothesis that unequal access to supermarkets in the city is not a modern phenomenon, as the “food desert” historical narrative implies. Rather, unequal access to quality food at fair prices is likely both an on-going condition in American cities, and has been a problem on the public policy agenda for several decades. This study investigates these hypotheses through two complementary research aims – a case study of supermarket locations in Brooklyn, New York from 1970 to 2010 and a discourse analysis of original policy documents to the urban supermarket political debates between 1960 and 1999. The first aim provides empirical data about supermarket trends in one metropolitan area. The second aim interprets the contours of the national political debates over supermarket access in the decades prior to the current “food desert” frame.

The approaches are complimentary in developing and interpreting new knowledge about urban supermarkets. For example, the spatial analysis can identify where supermarkets operated, but cannot provide information on the quality of the products offered within stores or their general cleanliness and operating standards. Similarly, without empirical evidence of where stores actually located, it is difficult to evaluate competing claims in the policy discourse about whether supermarket operators avoided servicing different populations. The final analysis will explore how the findings from these various methods taken together deepen our understanding of how supermarkets operated in the city and why it matters for politics, policy, and public health today.

This chapter begins with the methods used to develop the retail database in the case study of supermarket retail in Brooklyn, New York and a description of the analysis plan. The following section presents background literature on the policy discourse analysis methodology and details the data collection, data management, and analysis strategies. All procedures were submitted to the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health Institutional Review Board, and deemed not-Human Subjects Research.

3-2 Study Design: Historical Spatial Analysis

Overview

Since there are few longitudinal studies on supermarket access over time, examining historical supermarket retail trends in the present study helps to fill an important gap in the food access literature (Chen & Wang, 2014; Filomena, Scanlin, & Morland, 2013; Mead, 2008; Thibodeaux, 2015). The dominant narrative about the development of “food deserts” suggests that supermarkets migrated to the suburbs during the era of middle-class flight and macroeconomic restructuring of urban economies in the 1960s and 1970s leaving behind increasingly poor and under-resourced urban communities (Flournoy, 2010; Walker, Keane, & Burke, 2010). The “food desert” narrative is about decline – yet I am not aware of any evidence that demonstrates that predominantly black urban neighborhoods ever had equitable access to high quality grocery stores in their neighborhoods. Thibodeaux’s (2016) recent study, the only of its kind, found that between 1970 and 1990 in nine US cities supermarkets consistently located away from predominantly African American areas. Perhaps supermarkets were

found in white or more affluent urban areas prior to the era of supermarket flight, in which case the actual lived conditions of grocery access in poor or black neighborhoods may not be so different today than it was in the 1960s. Rather than a story about decline, “food desert” conditions may be a story about an unequal status quo.

This research begins to answer these questions through a case study of supermarket trends in Brooklyn, New York, using multiple sources of business data from 1970 to 2010. The specific aims of this analysis are: (1) build a retail database of supermarket locations in Brooklyn, New York (1970 – 2010); (2) examine how access to a supermarket differed between neighborhoods, using the metric of *persons per supermarket*; and (3) identify the socio-demographic characteristics of neighborhoods that lost or gained supermarkets between decades.

Study Setting: Brooklyn, New York

In some obvious ways New York City is an outlier among American cities – in other ways its racialized landscape is typical of other deindustrialized urban areas. It is still a city of immigrants – in the borough of Brooklyn, with a population of 2.6 million nearly one million are foreign born (DOP, 2013). New York City is densely populated, and has a public transit system with an average weekday ridership of more than 5 million (MTA). However, neighborhoods of New York City experienced the same demographic and economic transitions of other postindustrial cities described in the Background. At midcentury, Brooklyn was home to nearly 8,000 manufacturing firms; its busy port saw 45 percent of New York City’s commercial traffic (Osman, 2011). At this time, Osman and others described the borough as home to working class immigrant and ethnic

enclaves, a gentrifying class in downtown Brooklyn, and Puerto Rican and black households often crowded by discriminatory housing policy and racist real estate practices into increasingly dilapidated neighborhoods (Osman, 2011; Thabit, 2003).

Black households were concentrated in and around Bedford-Stuyvesant in central Brooklyn – these neighborhoods became untenably crowded as postwar waves of poor migrants from the south were restricted by housing policy and the threat of white violence from living in working class white neighborhoods (Kim, 2000; Rieder, 1985). Racial segregation in Brooklyn thus increased following World War Two, and by the 1960's, “the ghetto was a lived experience, an abstract category on a map, and a symbolic category used by local residents to orient themselves” (Osman 2011). White ethnics abandoned nearby neighborhoods in East New York and Brownsville for the suburbs or for the remaining white territories of Brooklyn, in fear of the perceived encroachment of crime and vice from “slum” neighborhoods (Rieder 1985). At the same time, cities were losing the blue-collar industrial jobs for which the migrants had escaped the dwindling tenant farming system to pursue and that white ethnics had used to rise from poverty in previous generations (Wilson 1997; 2012). As neighborhoods changed, small businesses such as green grocers, butchers, and bakers catering to the ethnic community fled and left behind a blighted commercial landscape (Thabit, 2003).

This process of racialized ghetto formation and commercial flight is characteristic of other postindustrial cities, making a case study of Brooklyn generalizable to some extent to other cities that experienced deindustrialization, white flight, and racialized, concentrated urban poverty (Sugrue, 2014). It's high population density and immense public transit system makes it unique from other postindustrial cities that depopulated

dramatically, leaving behind vast pockets of vacant homes and storefronts, like Baltimore or Detroit, and highly isolated poor communities with few retail options of any kind. In this way, New York City does not fit the “food desert” concept as neatly as other cities.

To better capture the local context, the New York City Health Department developed its own measurement of supermarket access - the Supermarket Need Index (Smith, Goranson, Bryon, Kerker, & Nonas, 2011). The SNI takes into account neighborhood demographics, population health, and retail composition factors to assess need and capacity for supermarket development⁷ (DCP, 2008). By this definition nearly 3 million New Yorkers live in areas of high need for supermarket development (DCP, 2008). As evidence of the unmet capacity for grocery store development in the city, the NYC Department of Planning reported that residents spend an estimated \$1 billion on groceries outside city limits.⁸ Following national trends, the SNI is highest in predominantly black neighborhoods, including Bedford-Stuyvesant and East New York in Brooklyn, the South Bronx, and historically black neighborhoods in Harlem (DCP, 2008).

Supermarkets are also only one feature of the retail food landscape; Kwate demonstrated that predominantly black areas (census blocks > 70% black) of New York City had greater fast food density than predominantly white areas independent of income; more affluent black areas had similarly high exposure to fast food as lower income areas (Kwate, Yau, Loh, & Williams, 2009). There are wide racial disparities in diet-related

⁷ The Supermarket Need Index is calculated based on “high population density, low access to a car at the household level, low household incomes, high rates of diabetes, high rates of obesity, low consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables, low share of fresh food retail, and capacity for new stores” (NYC Department of City Planning, 2008)

⁸ Estimated by the New York City Economic Development Corporation. Available at: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/supermarket/index.shtml>

chronic conditions – the prevalence of obesity among black New Yorkers is nearly twice that of whites and four times that of Asians (Raufman, Farley, Olson, & Kerker, 2007) (Raufman 2007). Diabetes rates are higher among blacks and Hispanics independent of income – black and Hispanic New Yorkers making more than \$50,000 per year have higher rates of diabetes than white adults who make less than \$25,000 annually (Karpati et al., 2004).

Brooklyn may make a particularly illustrative study for how food retail is related to the changing urban form because some poorer neighborhoods are experiencing rapid gentrification. For example, Bedford-Stuyvesant, the historically black neighborhood in Brooklyn considered high-need for improved food retail based on the SNI, is at the forefront of this issue: with its historic brownstones, easy access to Manhattan, and near enclosure by gentrification, it is now the fastest growing neighborhood in New York City (Hymowitz, 2013). New grocery stores and restaurants are often provocative symbols and harbingers of gentrification (Brown-Saracino, 2010). Other ‘underserved’ neighborhoods are not likely to experience gentrification in the near-term, which may provide an instructive comparison as to what factors might signal likelihood for food retail development.

There is also a vibrant food justice community in New York City today and historically; these different groups vie for the right to craft the narrative about food, history, politics, and health, and to shape policy and programs moving forward (Freudenberg, McDonough, & Tsui, 2011). The development of the SNI is just one such example – its definition of ‘supermarket need’ includes obesity prevalence as a criterion, demonstrating the power of the obesogenic model and its research practitioners to direct

policy and knowledge development. Locating this research in Brooklyn contributes to an active, ongoing food policy discourse among researchers, activists, and policymakers.

Data Collection and Management: Building the Supermarket Database

As described in the Background, a challenge of historical analysis of supermarket trends is accessing valid business lists. This study used proprietary business data from Dun & Bradstreet, supplemented by business data from publicly available sources. Since the credit rating firm Dun & Bradstreet (D&B) is a common source for supermarket retail data in the food environment literature, its limitations and biases have been shown in other studies (Bader, Ailshire, Morenoff, & House, 2010; Han et al., 2012). In one study, Dun & Bradstreet was found to reliably classify supermarkets and large grocery stores correctly, but less reliably classify small stores and convenience stores (Han et al., 2012). Importantly, in this study supermarket misclassification was not systematically related to area racial composition, though convenience stores were more likely to be misclassified when found in predominantly black census tracts (Han et al., 2012).

Data were purchased from D&B for all retail stores in the borough of Brooklyn (Kings County, New York) with the Standard Industrial Code (SIC) ‘5411’ – which includes all grocery stores, supermarkets and convenience stores. The data were a snapshot of all retail food stores open on December 31st in 1969, 1979, 1989, 1999, and 2009 (hereafter referred to as 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000, and 2010). The primary advantage of D&B data (and proprietary data from similar firms, like InfoUSA) compared with publicly available data is the inclusion of sales volume and number of employees for each store, which aids in identification of supermarkets versus grocery stores.

Sales volume is a standard indicator to determine whether a grocery store can be considered a ‘supermarket’ – which is a large full service retail food store with various departments that sell fresh and perishable foods.⁹ The D&B dataset included sales volume, but this variable was inconsistently reported across the years and was often missing in particular for the largest corporate supermarket chains, which were identified through name recognition. Employment numbers have also been used to distinguish supermarkets from grocery stores (Moore & Diez Roux, 2006; Thibodeaux, 2015). As seen in Table 3.1, within the D&B dataset employment was inconsistently reported in 1970 and 1990 (see Appendix A for more details on missing employment data within the D&B dataset).

Table 3.1: Original Store List from Dun & Bradstreet, with number and percent of missing sales volume and employment data from the total stores (1970-2010)

| | <u>1970</u> | <u>1980</u> | <u>1990</u> | <u>2000</u> | <u>2010</u> |
|-------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Total Stores in D&B List, (n) | 1917 | 1770 | 1749 | 1785 | 3160 |
| Missing Sales Volume, (n) | 630 | 62 | 579 | 134 | 51 |
| Percent missing, (%) | 32.9% | 3.5% | 33.1% | 7.5% | 1.6% |
| Missing Employment, (n) | 939 | 16 | 525 | 8 | 10 |
| Percent missing, (%) | 48.9% | 0.8% | 30.0% | 0.4% | 0.3% |

This study used both sales volume and name recognition to identify observations for inclusion from the original Dun & Bradstreet business list (table 3.2). Number of employees was used to sort the business list during the name recognition step, but was

⁹ Using guidelines from the Food Marketing Institute (www.fmi.org), a grocery store is considered a supermarket if it grosses more than \$2 million in annual sales. In 1970 and 1980, FMI identified a supermarket using \$1 million dollars as the minimum standard (source: *Progressive Grocer*, April 1981, page 44).

not an independent criterion for inclusion. The specific criteria used to identify supermarkets from the D&B business list were:

(1) Name recognition of regional or national chain supermarket

(2) Annual Sales Volume¹⁰

- 1970 & 1980 \geq \$1 million
- 1990, 2000 & 2010 \geq \$2 million

Table 3.2: Supermarkets Included from the Dun & Bradstreet Database, with number and percent of missing sales volume and employment data from the total supermarkets (1970-2010)

| Step 1: Inclusion by Chain Name Recognition | | | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | <u>1970</u> | <u>1980</u> | <u>1990</u> | <u>2000</u> | <u>2010</u> |
| # Supermarkets | 58 | 161 | 181 | 167 | 126 |
| Missing Sales Volume (#) | 5 | 18 | 59 | 41 | 33 |
| | 8.6% | 11.2% | 32.6% | 24.6% | 26.2% |
| Average Sales Volume (\$) | \$1,837,288 | \$1,556,165 | \$2,152,622 | \$2,866,207 | \$2,072,765 |
| Max | \$30,000,000 | \$26,800,000 | \$14,397,037 | \$50,000,000 | \$16,600,000 |
| Min | \$35,000 | \$50,000 | \$100,000 | \$35,000 | \$150,000 |
| Step 2: Inclusion by Minimum Sales Volume | | | | | |
| Sales Volume (\$) | <u>\geq\$1million</u> | <u>\geq\$1million</u> | <u>\geq\$2 million</u> | <u>\geq\$2 million</u> | <u>\geq\$2 million</u> |
| Supermarkets (#) | 43 | 115 | 76 | 74 | 66 |
| Combined List (Step 1 + Step 2) | 101 | 276 | 257 | 241 | 192 |
| Stores to Exit List | -25 | -98 | -76 | -71 | -47 |
| Final Count of Supermarkets | 76 | 178 | 181 | 170 | 145 |

¹⁰ Using guidelines from the Food Marketing Institute (www.fmi.org), a grocery store is considered a supermarket if it grosses more than \$2 million in annual sales. In 1970 and 1980, FMI identified a supermarket using \$1 million dollars as the minimum standard (source: *Progressive Grocer*, April 1981, page 44).

Markets that met the sales volume criterion were excluded when they referred to a deli, wholesaler, or the company headquarters (1970, n=1; 1980, n=3; 1990, n=8; 2000, n=8; 2010, n=6). The final business list from D&B was created by merging the lists derived by sales volume and name recognition, and removing the markets that overlapped in both lists (stores selected by name recognition that also met the sales volume criterion are listed in table 3.2 as Stores to Exit List).

The D&B data quality was lower than expected. 1969 was the oldest year for which D&B offered grocery business data at all, and not surprisingly, 1970 had the most incomplete data. To both check and improve the validity of the supermarket dataset, publicly available supermarket data was sought from the Brooklyn Public Library, the New York Public Library and their online databases. Though a variety of city business directories have been published throughout the history of New York City, the Yellow Pages was the only publicly available data source that had data for each of the study time points.

The Yellow Pages is a commonly used source of secondary food retail data, which has also been used in other studies assessing historical business trends; secondary business lists have been reported to both under- and over-estimate the number of stores, and are not as valid as primary fieldwork, such as visually observing (“ground truthing”) the presence of stores (Burgoine et al., 2009; Fleischhacker, Evenson, Sharkey, Pitts, & Rodriguez, 2013; Han et al., 2012; Wang, Gonzalez, Ritchie, & Winkleby, 2006). However, validating historical business data is a challenging task for food environment studies, since the gold standard of observing the stores in real time is not possible. It was possible to validate the 2010 data through Google street view, a strategy used by a variety

of other food retail studies (Clarke, Ailshire, Melendez, Bader, & Morenoff, 2010; Fleischhacker et al., 2013). Table 3.3 demonstrates the fairly low concordance between the D&B data and the Yellow Pages directory data.

Table 3.3 Creating the Supermarket List: Merging Business Directories
Step 3: Merge with Supermarket Data from Telephone Directories

| | <u>1970</u> | <u>1980</u> | <u>1990</u> | <u>2000</u> | <u>2010</u> |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Yellow Pages (# Supermarkets) | 242 | 164 | 144 | 125 | 94 |
| Dun&Bradstreet (# Supermarkets) | 76 | 178 | 181 | 170 | 145 |
| # Supermarkets in both lists | 45 | 83 | 108 | 102 | 67 |
| % Agreement | 16.5% | 32.0% | 49.8% | 52.8% | 38.9% |
| Final Count: (# Supermarkets) | 273 | 259 | 217 | 193 | 172 |

The resulting five business lists from each year were then merged into one database and sorted by address to scan where stores were open in more than one time period. Each address on the business list, across all five time periods, was audited using Google Streetview to visually check the property referenced. In this way, I identified additional supermarkets (n=34) located at addresses included for earlier time periods but missing from the 2010 business list. By sorting the supermarkets by address, I also identified several addresses with missing data between decades – for example, the Yellow Pages listed 3001 Fort Hamilton Parkway as an Associated Food Store in 1970, and the Dun & Bradstreet business list records 3001 Fort Hamilton Parkway as an Associated Food Store in 1990. It is very possible that in 1980 the storefront was closed,

and reopened again in the next decade. It is also possible, given the level of missing data from both business lists, that there was in fact an Associated supermarket in that location. If there were more than one decade missing, data was not imputed for those years (for example, if there was a store at 1970, 1980, and 2010, I did not add a store for 1980 and 1990).

In both Dun & Bradstreet and the Yellow Pages from 1970, the original supermarket chain in America, the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company (better known today as the A&P), was absent. Based on the archival review and personal local knowledge, I knew there were many A&P's in New York City in this time period. I contacted several sources in an effort to find an A&P business list for 1970 – including the author of a history of *The A&P: The Great A&P and the Struggle for Small Business in America*, and the official A&P Historical Society. Neither could furnish a list. A scan of local newspapers generated a public announcement for a liquor license application in the Brooklyn Daily Eagle from 1966 that listed all (n=96) A&P supermarkets in Kings County (Brooklyn) (see appendix B). Following the addition of supermarkets through this expanded set of criteria (A&P source for 1970, imputed data, visual confirmation from 2010) I created a second “expanded” list of supermarket locations (Table 3.4), and ran all analyses on both the original and expanded list. Findings from this sensitivity analysis can be found in the Results, and all tables made using the original dataset can be found in Appendix D.

Table 3.4: Supermarket List “B” with Expanded Inclusion Criteria

| Step 4: Sensitivity Analysis with Stores Added by Alternate Methods | | | | | |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| | <u>1970</u> | <u>1980</u> | <u>1990</u> | <u>2000</u> | <u>2010</u> |
| # Supermarkets Added | 96 | 16 | 14 | 15 | 33 |
| <i>Final Count</i> | <i>369</i> | <i>275</i> | <i>231</i> | <i>208</i> | <i>205</i> |

Creating the Retail and Census Database

The supermarket business lists, both the original and the expanded criteria lists, were merged with decennial census data using ArcGIS 10.2 mapping software (Environmental Systems Research Institute, Redlands, CA). First, supermarket locations were geocoded as point data to their street locations in Brooklyn, New York. These points were then joined based on spatial location to the census tract that contained them, creating a count variable of supermarkets per census tract. This study used normalized census tract boundaries, accessed through Geolytics. Census tract boundaries change over time, making direct spatial comparison difficult decade to decade (Logan, Xu, & Stults, 2014). Geolytics created a database of normalized historic census data wherein census data from prior to 2010 is adjusted to fit 2010 tract boundaries and to allow for direct comparison across time (Geolytics). I accessed this standardized census data through Geolytics Neighborhood Change Database (NCDB), available through the Milton Eisenhower library at Johns Hopkins University. Supermarket counts per tract were joined with the socio-demographic decennial census data (for 2010, the data are derived from the 2006-2010 5-year estimates from the American Community Survey).

Analytic Strategy

The purpose of this analysis was to use empirical historic data to explore how supermarket access differed between neighborhoods at each point in time and to characterize the neighborhoods that lost or gained supermarkets between each decade. The analysis begins by conducting descriptive analyses to explore key socio-demographic variables for each decade in the study time period.

Population Characteristics

Population socio-demographic variables were measured at the census tract and the zip code tabulation area (ZCTA). Population density was measured as number of persons per km², and the mean population density was calculated for majority ($\geq 50\%$) black and majority white tracts. Population density is an important metric because it is related to racial composition and to supermarket siting decisions (Massey & Denton, 1993; Thibodeaux, 2015; Wilde, Llobrera, & Ver Ploeg, 2014). Racial composition was measured at the tract level¹¹; tracts were identified as majority black or majority white if the share of the tract population was $\geq 50\%$ of that racial group, and identified as predominantly black or predominantly white if the share of the tract population was $\geq 80\%$ of that racial group. If a tract was neither majority white nor majority black it was identified as no majority. Tracts were identified as higher poverty if the share of persons

¹¹ All descriptive analyses were also aggregated to the zip code tabulation area (ZCTA) and is available in the Appendix. ZCTA is a useful level of aggregation, because it approximates neighborhoods. However, in the aggregation data is necessarily lost.

living under the federal poverty level¹² was $\geq 20\%$, and lower poverty if $<20\%$. The median household income was calculated for each tract; higher income tracts were identified as those above the median household income and lower income tracts were those below the median household income.

There are 760 census tracts and 37 ZCTAs in Brooklyn. Only those area units with households were included in the analysis; nonresidential areas such as industrial districts, waterfronts, cemeteries and parks were excluded. As a result, there is a slight difference in the number of census tracts or ZCTAs included in the analysis each decade, as non-residential areas shifted over time (Census tracts: 1970=742; 1980=744; 1990=743, 2000=745; 2010=744 and ZCTAs: 1970=36; 1980-2010=37). The mean percent of foreign-born persons was calculated for each tract; the mean percent of foreign-born persons was also calculated among majority black and majority white tracts. Choropleth maps depicting racial composition and percent poverty provide a visualization of the spatial distribution of socio-demographic groups.

Supermarket Access: Persons per Supermarket

Descriptive statistics were calculated for the number of supermarkets in each decade, including: the total number of supermarkets in the borough, the mean number of supermarkets per census tract and per ZCTA, and the minimum and maximum number of supermarkets per census tract and ZCTA. The Results present the analysis using the

¹² The poverty level is determined by a calculation of income, standard costs, and the size of the household. For more information on how the federal poverty level is assigned see: US Census Bureau, Poverty, About (2016). <<http://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/poverty/about.html>>

expanded dataset; tables that were created using the original dataset can be found in appendix D.

A two-group mean comparison t-test was used to identify if there was any difference in supermarket access between areas by socio-demographic characteristics. Agencies within New York City have used the ratio of *persons per supermarket* and *square foot of supermarket retail space per person* to compare geographic areas of higher and lower access to supermarkets (AECOM, 2010; Affairs, 1991). In this study, the ratio of persons per supermarket was calculated for each tract and ZCTA by dividing the area population by the number of supermarkets within that area. Areas without a supermarket were excluded from the means comparison. The two group comparisons included: between majority white and majority black tracts, between predominantly white and predominantly black tracts, and between higher poverty and lower poverty tracts. To understand the potential differences by poverty level within racial groups, mean supermarket per person was tested between lower poverty majority black tracts and higher poverty majority black tracts, as well as between lower poverty majority white tracts and higher poverty majority white tracts. Statistical significance for the t-statistic was assessed using a two-sided alpha of 0.05.

Supermarket Trends: Gains and Losses Across the Decades

Supermarket retail trends were measured at the tract and ZCTA level, including the mean change in supermarkets per area level, the minimum and maximum change per area level, and the number of area units that lost at least one supermarket, gained at least

one supermarket, or remained the same between decades (1970-1980; 1980-1990; 1990-2000; 2000-2010).

To assess the socio-demographic differences between neighborhoods that lost or gained supermarkets between each decade, two group mean comparison t-tests were conducted (using a two-sided t-test, alpha: 0.05) using the number of supermarkets aggregated to the ZCTA level. The following comparison in means were calculated: (majority white and majority non-white; majority black and majority non-black; predominantly white and predominantly non-white; predominantly black and predominantly non-black; higher poverty and lower poverty; above median income and below median income). Findings at the ZCTA level are presented in Results; findings at the census tract level are found in Appendix C.

These data provide exploratory descriptive statistics about which types of neighborhoods lost or gained supermarkets between each decade. These findings are an important first step in understanding the complexities of supermarket trends that occurred during the study time period (1970 to 2010). Existing evidence suggests that supermarkets declined in American cities, but there is only one other study that specifically examined the neighborhood socio-demographic differences associated with supermarket locations within the study time frame (Thibodeaux, 2015). Findings will add richness to the supermarket migration narrative and may corroborate narratives about supermarket closure from the policy discourse.

3-3 Historical Policy Discourse Analysis

Research Question and Specific Aims

The absence of urban supermarkets constitutes a public policy problem today, yet to my knowledge there is no modern scholarship on how different interest groups perceived and responded to supermarket operating conditions or closures at the time they were occurring. Key questions exist including: What reasons did the grocery industry give to explain inner city store closures? Did the industry lobby for any specific market interventions from federal or local governments? Which groups advocated for better supermarket conditions for inner city or black residents, and which conditions did they identify as most problematic? Who or what did advocacy groups blame for creating the problematic conditions, and where did they place the responsibility for alleviating them? Did they advocate for specific policies in response to these problems? And finally, how did the policy discourse shift over time as the historical context it occurred in changed?

These questions cannot be answered by any existing quantitative datasets. Thus, this research fills a major gap in the literature by answering these questions through a narrative analysis of policy discourse produced by the various stakeholders to the problems of urban supermarket access. The aim of this analysis is to examine how stakeholders constructed the conditions of supermarkets in the inner city as a public policy problem amenable to policy solutions through a discourse analysis of texts produced by various interest groups (1960-1999). Specific research questions that inform my approach to this aim are:

- 1.1 How did political actors construct alternative problem definitions within the public policy discourse on supermarkets in the inner city?
- 1.2. Which public policy solutions were generated by the alternative problem definitions?
- 1.3. How did political actors strategically use stories, arguments, facts, cultural beliefs, or symbolic representation to communicate meaning within their policy narratives?
- 1.4. How have policy narratives evolved (or remained constant) over time as their “nested contexts” have changed?

Policy Discourse Analysis: An Interpretive Approach to Policy Studies

This aim takes an interpretive rather than an empirical approach to knowledge generation, due to the emphasis on how political actors (stakeholders, in this case) socially construct public policy problems through language and discourse. It begins with the premise, shared by post-positivist policy scholars, that problem definition is subjective (Bacchi, 2000; Clemons, 2009; Danziger, 1995). In his work on argumentation in public policy, Majone writes, “objective conditions are seldom so compelling and so unambiguous that they set the policy agenda” (Majone, 1989). Rather, real world conditions become defined as “problems” when an interest group or political actor successfully moves their construction of the social problem onto the governmental agenda (Fischer, 2003; Kingdon, 1995). As documented by Kingdon, the problems that reach the policy agenda are the ones with the most political support, not necessarily the problems that are most urgently in the public interest (Kingdon, 1995). If the problem has a readymade and feasible policy solution attached to it, it is even more likely to climb

higher on the policy agenda, while problems with more complex causes and solutions are ignored (Kingdon, 1995).

Problem definition is, therefore, “always strategic”; political actors use argumentation (stories, rhetoric, symbols and numbers) to frame a version of the problem that advances their own interests and conforms to their preexisting cultural beliefs (Stone, 1997). Problem definition outlines the scope of the problem: the stakeholders who are affected by it, the agents or circumstances that are at fault for causing it, and where the responsibility lies in addressing it (Clemons, 2009; McBeth & Clemons, 1999; Stone, 1989). Political actors construct and communicate problems and their solutions in the form of policy narratives, which may appear as causal stories or as arguments (Atkinson, Held, & Jeffares, 2011; Fischer & Forester, 1993). Post-positive policy discourse analysis investigates the strategic way that problems are framed within these policy narratives to promote particular interests and highlight one set of facts and values over another (Schön & Rein, 1994b). The analytic act of “deconstruction” is the interpretation of the tacit frames, assumptions, and belief systems that are embedded within stakeholders’ policy narratives.

Narrative analysis of policy discourse is particularly useful when the social problem is controversial and intractable and when conflicting problem definitions are not resolvable by appeals to better empirical evidence alone (Schön & Rein, 1994b). In such cases, sometimes referred to as ‘wicked problems,’ the conflicts are inherently value-based and reflect different underlying understandings of the social world (Fischer, 2003; Rittel & Webber, 1973). According to Fischer, a policy analyst “cannot simply compare different perspectives for dealing with a problem without recognizing that frames change

the problem” (Fischer, 2003). Conflicting parties to a controversial problem actually construct different versions of the policy problem, include a different set of relevant facts and belief systems, and not surprisingly, argue for radically different policy recommendations. For instance, gun violence in America, depending on your point of view, ought to be resolved either by the opposing policies of increasing the gun supply or by imposing limits on gun ownership (Callaghan & Schnell, 2005). These policy alternatives arise from two very different framings of the problem by various stakeholder groups. A “frame-critical policy analysis,” proposed by Schön and Rein, examines the source of the conflicting frames in “the histories, roles, institutional contexts, and interests” of the political actors involved in the controversy (1994b). Such an analysis would identify the “nested contexts” in which political actors craft causal stories, embed culturally relevant belief systems, and advocate for their interests (Schön & Rein, 1994b). Contextualizing policy discourse in its political and institutional history aids the interpretation of the underlying belief structures and assumptions found in policy narratives.

Framing a problem involves the strategic use of rhetorical devices, or what Stone refers to as “symbolic representation” (Stone, 1997). By using symbols, political actors in a policy controversy can communicate tacit values, assumptions, and cultural norms associated with their version of the problem (Atkinson et al., 2011). These symbols, typically using everyday language, will make the “diagnosis and prescription seem obvious” (Schön & Rein, 1994b). Atkinson and others suggest that despite the strategic nature of problem definition, rhetorical devices in policy narratives are often an attempt by the narrator to make sense of the social world using everyday language and taken for

granted assumptions (Atkinson et al., 2011; Feldman, Sköldberg, Brown, & Horner, 2004; Hanne, 2014). Policy narratives commonly use metaphors to make an abstract problem more concrete and thus more relatable for the listener. A metaphor suggests that one thing is like another, and whether the comparison is apt or not, implies a “prescription for action” that justifies the comparison (Stone, 1997). Using the “food desert” example, if a neighborhood is like a desert and unfit for habitation, then we should create healthful oases within it.

A tenet of interpretive policy analysis is that some political actors have more power to influence problem definition than others, and so one function of policy analysis is to consciously include the policy narratives of marginalized groups (Fox & Miller, 1995). Mainstream discourse most often occurs among policy elites - those who can influence public opinion and policy decision-making like public officials, powerful interest groups, the media, and research scientists (Clemons, 2009). Academics shape public discourse, whether they intend to or not, in the research agendas they pursue, the questions they ask, and the categories they decide to count (Murphy & Fafard, 2012). According to Kingdon, government officials often turn to academic communities for more information about problems already on the political agenda in the short-term, and scholarly research also influences the “long term climate of ideas” that may affect agendas and the considerations of policy alternatives (Kingdon, 1995).

Policy discourse analysis can reveal how the dominant discourse in public and academic circles may actually reproduce and reify elite constructions of the problem (Fischer, 2003). Post-positive discourse analysis purposively collects and analyzes the narratives, problem constructions, policy prescriptions and embedded belief systems of

non-dominant interest groups and constituencies (Clemons, 2009). Uncovering problem definitions from multiple conflicting viewpoints generates the potential to reframe public policy problems, identify new policy alternatives, and consider additional normative and empirical criteria by which to judge those alternatives (Roe, 1994; Schön & Rein, 1994b). By actively seeking out marginalized discourses the analysis may also document the agency of subordinated groups in solving their own problems as they identify and experience them, which is often missing in the accounts of the mainstream policy discourse and the research agendas of academics.

This dissertation research applies the methodology of policy discourse analysis to investigate the politics of urban supermarket access in the 1960s through the 1990s. This methodological approach has been applied to problems of environmental justice (Fischer & Hajer, 1999); welfare reform (Schram, 2006); and obesity (Wright & Harwood, 2009b); though it is little used in public health research (Murphy & Fafard, 2012). Discourse analysis has not yet been applied to the problem of urban supermarket access. Using original documents, this study uncovers the policy narratives of the stakeholders to the debate over urban grocery and uses the framework of Stone in particular to interpret the hidden assumptions and frames embedded in those competing policy narratives (Stone, 1989, 1997). Contextualizing the debate in its historical and political context (Schön and Rein's "nested contexts") will aid in interpreting the policy narratives.

Data Collection and Analysis

Study Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The data sources used to answer the research questions in this study are text documents produced by stakeholders to the public policy problem of supermarket access in American cities between 1960 and 1999. To be included in the analytic sample, the documents must have specifically referenced an on-going debate about the conditions (or problems) of supermarket operations in American cities, such as their openings and closures, issues particular to operating in “inner city” (or ghetto, central city, downtown, urban) neighborhoods, or operating conditions in black neighborhoods. Data were restricted to original documents (including digital copies of original documents); thus, documents produced prior to 1960 or in 2000 and later were excluded. The search was restricted to documents published in the United States because these were deemed most relevant to the study. Documents that were published by or about individuals or institutions that had participated in the policy discourse on the problems of and solutions for the inner city supermarket access were included. Stakeholders are theorized to be individuals, groups, or organizations with an interest in the policy, as well as the ability to influence the policy process (Brugha & Varvasovszky, 2000). This research does not include a systematic search of newspapers, as this study aims to uncover subjective stakeholder narratives rather than third party (i.e., media) accounts of those positions.

Data Collection and Search Strategy

To access data capable of answering the research question required uncovering the forums in which interest groups articulated and debated the problems of urban of supermarket access, as well as the specific documents that recorded their perspectives and their political actions. The search strategy began by identifying which interest groups

had a stake in the public policy problems of urban supermarkets, and the forums in which they might articulate their agendas and points of view. The search for possible archives began with archives that might hold documents produced by the stakeholder group that was identified a priori – the supermarket industry. Additional stakeholder groups were identified following the close reading of the reports, articles, and transcripts uncovered in the first round of document review, and are described below.

ProQuest was the primary online database used to search for relevant documents; ProQuest is a large and diverse online database containing more than 6 billion digitized pages. Specifically, ProQuest Central, ProQuest Congressional, and ProQuest History Vault were used. ProQuest Central is the largest multidisciplinary database with more than 11,000 titles, 8,000 of which are full text; it is a compilation of ProQuest's most commonly used datasets, including magazines and trade publications. ProQuest Congressional contains primary source documents from 1789 to present, including Congressional Hearings, Reports, Bills, and Resolutions. ProQuest History Vault contains primary sources related to the black freedom movement, including government and official publications, organizational records, as well as personal papers and diaries.

The search for supermarket industry documents started within grocery trade publications found in the ProQuest Central periodical database. Relevant trade publications, written and read by industry insiders, were indexed to, "Food and Food Industries – Grocery Trade," which listed the titles of 35 grocery trade publications. Each title was scanned to identify any that published on general grocery industry matters in the United States during the study time period, and among those three were identified for

further search: *Progressive Grocer*, *Chain Store Age*, and *Supermarket Business*.¹³ These 3 periodicals were then systematically searched for articles that met the inclusion criteria for relevant data (reference the conditions/problems of operating supermarkets in the inner city, store openings and closures, or issues regarding supermarket operations in black neighborhoods). Search terms included “urban,” “ghetto,” “inner city,”¹⁴ and “African American” - the search terms were purposefully broad to capture any potentially relevant articles (see Table 3.5 for details). I conducted a scan of article titles, and opened the full document of any title that was likely to meet the inclusion criteria based on the title and short blurb listed in the results output. Out of the 94 results among trade periodicals, 23 articles were included for analysis. Most articles among the initial 94 hits were general commentaries about how to run a successful grocery business, and focused on case studies, alternative store formats, and merchandising strategies (how to select the product mix). Unless those articles were written specifically in response to how to operate in the conditions of the inner city or urban African American market, they were excluded.

Documents were also collected from the Food Marketing Institute (FMI) archives. The FMI is a leading lobby group for the supermarket industry and was formed in 1977, following the merger of two trade associations (National Association of Food Chains and the Super Market Institute) that had been in operation since the 1930s (FMI, 2016). As a resource for food retailers nation-wide, the FMI website offers a variety of research

¹³ Supermarket Business changed names several times. It began as Food Topics prior to 1969 and then changed to Supermarketing until 1979, thereafter it became Supermarket Business, until it merged with Progressive Grocer in 2001. Supermarketing was also searched. The periodicals not included for further search were either from outside the U.S. or did not publish within the study time frame.

¹⁴ Today it is relatively uncommon to see the terms “inner city” or “ghetto” in social science literature, as these terms have taken on a pejorative meaning in public discourse. However, they were commonly used descriptive terms, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s, and were important to use in my search strategy to uncover documents from past policy discourse.

resources, including digital access to the latest FMI research reports and an online portal to search their extensive archive. A search of the online catalogue uncovered topical FMI research reports from the 1970s and 1980s, but the results offered title and abstract only – there were no links to the online copies of the older reports. In February 2015, I arranged an in-person appointment to visit the archives, which are located in Arlington, Virginia so that I could read and acquire these sources. After I explained my research questions, the FMI librarian brought me large folders indexed to “Supermarket Development - Inner City Locations” that contained marketing reports, conference papers, government hearings, newspaper articles and grocery trade periodical clippings organized by decade since the 1960s.¹⁵ I returned in February of 2016 to browse through the articles again prior to data analysis, and to identify the number of documents within the files that were excluded from the analysis. In total, I collected 86 individual documents from the FMI archive. 109 documents were excluded. The vast majority of excluded documents were newspaper articles, some were press releases of studies or reports already found within the archives, and the remaining documents were about technical aspects of the grocery industry not relevant to the present study.

That the main supermarket lobby group would maintain a specific archive of all reports and articles relevant to inner city store operations demonstrated the salience of this topic for the grocery industry. It also demonstrated the connection between the industry and marketing academics – there are several academics that authored numerous reports in the archives, some of which were commissioned by FMI. Based on these reports, marketing and business academics clearly participated in the public policy discourse over supermarkets in the inner city.

¹⁵ The newspaper articles in the FMI archive were not included in the analysis.

Within the FMI folders were the transcripts of two Congressional Hearings held on supermarket operations in the inner city, from 1967 and 1992, which featured the testimony of marketing academics and industry representatives, as well as consumer advocates and civil rights organizations. Based on the testimony found in these Hearings, I determined that consumer advocates were also a key party to the public policy discourse. I later performed a systematic search of Congressional Hearings, through the ProQuest Congressional database, to identify any other Hearings on the subject of inner city grocery operations that might identify additional policy narratives. I began the search within ProQuest Congressional using the subject index “grocery stores and supermarkets,” and then conducted a title scan of each hearing to identify any relevant documents. If the title suggested it might match inclusion criteria, I opened the full document and searched within the text for each instance that referenced supermarkets to check for inclusion criteria. Out of 104 results, 14 Congressional Hearings (including the two already identified through the FMI archive) were included for analysis. The 90 excluded hearings were not relevant to the study question. The search was intentionally broad to cast a wide net, preferring to manually sort through potentially relevant documents than to risk missing documents with hyper-specific search terms.

To uncover documents produced by the civil rights movement, I searched the ProQuest History Vault database within “The Black Freedom Movement in the 20th Century” module - an archive of documents produced by civil rights organizations and related government records. A broad initial search for “supermarket” generated 452 results. Almost all references to supermarkets in the documents were about employment discrimination campaigns, as supermarkets were common sites of collective action to

demand equal employment opportunities. There were also many documents that listed riot damage, and supermarkets were among the most commonly damaged properties in riots. These documents were important evidence about the targeted nature of urban riots, but they did not contain policy narratives about supermarket conditions or issues with access. These documents were excluded if there was no accompanying narrative that explained how the conditions of supermarket operations in black neighborhoods led to the stores being targeted for protest.

To narrow the search to policy related documents after an initial scan of the total results sorted by relevance, the search was restricted to the “Civil Rights Movement and the Federal Government” and “Black Power” collections within the History Vault archive. A total of 51 documents remained. Of these, 6 were ultimately included, as in these documents supermarket access and shopping conditions were a specific rather than a tangential or passing topic of analysis.

I also searched issues of *Black Enterprise* magazine, a periodical aimed at promoting black business interests, for any references to supermarket issues. *Black Enterprise* articles offered a perspective on black business owners in the grocery industry, as well as consumer interests of black communities.¹⁶ A search for “supermarket” yielded 54 results, of which 7 were included.¹⁷ Supermarket owners were frequently on the Black Enterprise Top 100 biggest businesses list, published every year, and so the most common result for supermarket was a passing reference to or list of a successful

¹⁶ The first issue of Black Enterprise, released in 1970, explained the need for their publication in the following way: “Lacking capital, managerial and technical knowledge and crippled by prejudice, the minority businessman has been effectively kept out of the American marketplace. We want to help change this.” As quoted in: Graves, Earl. (2000). Why Black Enterprise. Black enterprise, 31, 62-66.

¹⁷ Black Enterprise was only available as an abstract on ProQuest Central between 1973 and 1987 (and as full text after 1987). I was able to find full text of the search results prior to 1987 through Google Books.

supermarket owner. Ads for supermarkets also came up in the search results. Unless supermarket access or shopping conditions was the focus of the article, it was excluded.

Table 3.5 summarizes the total number of documents identified through the various searches. In total, 136 documents were included for analysis (see Appendix F for a bibliography of the included documents). Of the 136 documents, 13 were from the 1960s, 47 were from the 1970s, 19 were from the 1980s, and 57 were from the 1990s. The numbers alone do not convey the richness of the documents, however. The 13 documents from the 1960s include three major Congressional hearings and an important government report (The Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders). In the 1990s, most of the 57 documents are short articles from grocery trade publications.

Table 3.5: Source List* with Index and Search Terms

| Database Name | Index Terms | Search terms | Results | Included |
|--|---|----------------------------|---------|------------|
| FMI Archive | "inner city" "downtown" "ghetto" | | 195 | 86 |
| ProQuest Central | "Food and Food Industry - Grocery Trade" | "inner city" | 95 | 23 |
| ProQuest History Vault | "Civil Rights Movement and the Federal Government" "Black Power" | "supermarket" | 50 | 6 |
| ProQuest Congressional (Hearings) | "Grocery Stores and Supermarkets" | "supermarket" "grocery" | 104 | 14 |
| Google Books | <i>Black Enterprise</i> | "supermarket" | 54 | 7 |
| TOTAL | | | | 136 |

*Number of documents by decade: 1960 (n=13), 1970 (n=47), 1980 (n=19), 1990 (n=57)

Data Management and Analysis

Data Management

All documents (n=136) were uploaded to the qualitative data analysis software MaxQDA (MAXQDA, 1989-2016,). The documents that had been identified through online databases and search engines (ProQuest Central, ProQuest Congressional, ProQuest History Vault, New York Public Library online catalogue, and Google) were already downloaded in PDF form, and were uploaded into MaxQDA. All documents from the FMI archive, which were originally print documents, had to be converted into text-searchable PDFs before they could be uploaded into MaxQDA. In order to digitize the print documents, an iPhone camera first captured photos of the texts page by page. A PDF converter application on the iPhone, CamScanner, then transformed the camera images into a PDF file format and exported those PDF files into a Google Drive account.

From Google Drive, the PDF files were downloaded into Adobe Acrobat Professional, where the optical character recognition (OCR) tool converted the documents from an image into searchable text. Any matches the OCR tool identified as ‘suspect’ were manually corrected. The majority of documents had few suspect words, though a subset of documents (fewer than a 10) required the manual correction of at least half of words in the document. These were the oldest documents that used a typewriter font, which the OCR had trouble correctly recognizing but were perfectly legible to the eye. Had the documents been uploaded without conducting OCR, the text within them would not have been properly searchable in the analysis software or would result in illegible passages when segments of the document were coded and exported. Once all

print documents from the FMI archive were successfully digitized and text recognized, they were uploaded into MaxQDA and ready for analysis.

A complete bibliography of documents used in the analysis is compiled in Appendix F, numbered and organized by year and data source. A number is associated with each unique document, and these numbers are used to cite the origin of specific claims within the Results chapter. Parenthetical references in the Results chapter refer to sources of information that provided additional context for the analysis; these documents were not included as “data” within the analysis.

Coding and Narrative Analysis

All documents were first printed and read thoroughly for data comprehension and familiarization prior to any coding and interpretation of the texts. I coded segments of text within each document for the narratives that stakeholders crafted, in the form of both stories and arguments. Policy stories explain what the problem is, who or what is to blame for creating the problem, and what policies or actions could remediate the problem as they have defined it (Stone, 1989, 1997). These stories often use empirical evidence, refer to historical context, conjure implicit or explicit social norms, and use a variety of rhetorical devices to effectively communicate their position and promote their version of reality. A policy argument contains only a premise and a conclusion, such as a causal argument about who or what is to blame for creating a problem, leaving the reader to interpret what future actions ought to be taken to address the problem (or they argue for a particular policy direction, leaving the reader to interpret who or what caused the problem in the first place) (Clemons, 2009; Fischer, 2003; Fischer & Forester, 1993).

The narratives were coded in large sections of text, typically covering many paragraphs, to maintain the context and richness of the passages. These passages were then examined for their manifest and latent¹⁸ content through a summarization of the manifest content (the specific stories and arguments that stakeholders made to communicate their problem definitions), and then an interpretation of the latent content (the symbolic representations that stakeholders used to communicate underlying beliefs and assumptions).

The analysis occurred through three iterative steps. The first level of analysis involved coding for manifest content – statements of problem definition and policy solutions. Passages were coded thematically by type of problems (e.g., high crime, insurance rates in the inner city, poor access to credit) and types of solutions (e.g., black business ownership, tax incentives for supermarket development, consumer education). Codes developed iteratively – as new themes emerged the documents were reread and recoded if necessary. These narratives were then sorted by decade, so that I could identify how the discourse unfolded chronologically and between stakeholders within each time period.

The second level analysis was restricted to the policy narrative passages (problems and solutions) that had been identified in the first level of coding, using the specific research questions in this aim as prompts for coding. Policy narratives were

¹⁸ Content analysis in the social sciences often uses a quantitative analysis of qualitative data (texts, interviews, images). A quantitative analysis would code for and count manifest content, transforming the qualitative data into frequencies and statistics. This approach has higher reliability than a qualitative content analysis; codes are clearly defined and applied to the text by multiple coders, allowing for the computation of inter-coder reliability. Qualitative content analysis, on the other hand, has lower reliability but greater validity. Similar to qualitative content analysis, this research uses a narrative analysis that includes both manifest and latent content (McBeth & Clemons, 1999).

interpreted to identify the facts, assumptions, and belief systems used in the framing of the problem/solution narrative. Passages were also coded for the use of any symbolic representation or rhetorical devices common to frame construction, such as metaphor. This is the analysis of “latent content” – the meanings embedded in problem and solution statements.

Finally, the third level of analysis involved coding all documents for passages about the institutional and historical contexts that stakeholders referenced in their policy narratives and problem frames. Using a hermeneutic approach in this stage, policy narratives were reread within the context of the entire document that they were derived from, and the nested contexts of policy narratives were interpreted with the assistance of the a priori knowledge gained from reading the other texts (Kuckartz, 2014). The purpose of coding for the institutional or historical context of problem definition was to analyze how discourse coalitions might be situated in different nested contexts, and how those contexts might help explain their different (and perhaps conflicting) framing of the problem, both at one time and over time in the study period as historical and institutional contexts changed.

Narrative analysis of policy discourse suggests the possibility of reframing public policy problems through the analysis of competing problem narratives (Roe, 1994). For example, the sustainable development frame allowed for more cooperation between business interests and environmental justice groups that had previously conflicted over environmental protection and pro-growth frames. A “frame-critical” analysis of policy narratives, one that uncovers how (through stories and rhetoric) and why (through nested contexts) various frames were used to construct alternative versions of public policy

problems, may ultimately produce a dialogue that can reframe the problem and make it less intractable (Schön & Rein, 1994b). Findings from these analyses are reported in the Results chapter, and the implications for reframing, future research, and policy based on the findings of these analyses are detailed in the Discussion section.

3-4 Techniques to Enhance Validity and Reliability

The present research combines qualitative and quantitative methods in a parallel mixed methods design to investigate different strands of how and why supermarket access has changed over time in American cities. One advantage of mixed methods designs is the possibility of methodological triangulation; as Denzin explained, data from multiple sources will either demonstrate convergence, inconsistency, or contradiction and each outcome helps advance understanding of the social phenomenon under investigation (Denzin, 1978). As a parallel design, this study used simultaneous triangulation in which findings from each method are complimentary and aid in the interpretation of the other (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007). Findings have analytic, not population, generalizability, meaning they can be used to refine and expand existing theory (Yin, 2009). According to Schwartz-Shea, the burden of transferability is on the researcher who wishes to replicate the study in a new setting and make comparison with findings and theories developed in the original setting (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2006).

When research follows an interpretive approach and uses qualitative methods of analysis the standards to evaluate quality are related but somewhat different than the concepts of validity and reliability as applied to positivist empirical studies. Parallel to the concept of internal validity, qualitative studies use the criteria of “authenticity and

credibility” as internal quality standards (Kuckartz, 2014). When evaluating the internal validity of an interpretive study, “the main question is how well the researcher’s representations are found in the data” (Kuckartz, 2014). So that readers can judge if the interpretations of the policy discourse analysis are authentic, I present passages of ‘thick description’ from the documents that retain the language of the speaker as well as the context that informed the interpretation. Maxwell advises qualitative researchers to actively search for and to present evidence that contradicts their primary interpretations (Maxwell, 1996); to help readers evaluate the credibility of my results, I sought for evidence that could lead to other interpretations. In the historical analysis of supermarket trends, multiple retail data sources were used to improve the accuracy of the business lists and the validity of the findings. All procedures are detailed so that other researchers could replicate the methods in other metropolitan areas.

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CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

4-1 Summary of Key Findings

The purpose of this research study is to historicize urban supermarket access to examine both how and why supermarkets access in the inner city developed over time. This section begins with a case study of one urban area, using data from 1970 to 2010. The analysis identifies supermarket retail and socio-demographic trends that occurred during the study time period, in Brooklyn, New York. The analysis begins with socio-demographic trends the occurred in the borough of Brooklyn between 1970 and 2010, which provides context to understand the trends in supermarket retail over the same time period. Compared with 2010, Brooklyn was more populous, more densely populated, more white, and less poor and had nearly twice as many supermarkets in 1970 (see Table 4.1). Majority black neighborhoods and higher poverty areas had consistently higher ratios of persons per supermarket than majority white and lower poverty areas. In earlier decades, there was greater supermarket loss from white or higher income/lower poverty areas than from black or lower income/higher poverty areas.

Following the historical supermarket analysis are findings from a policy discourse analysis on supermarkets in the city using documents from the 1960s through the 1990s. The discourse analysis illuminates and complicates the findings from the historical case study. Though urban poverty increased, white households fled the city, and supermarkets closed the doors of their urban locations, the story of supermarkets in the city is more complicated than a story of urban decline. The findings of the discourse analysis

highlight the role of racism, public policy, and capital to explain the food retail landscapes of the inner city.

4-2 Historical Supermarket Analysis: Brooklyn, New York (1970 – 2010)

Demographic Trends (1970 – 2010)

In 1970, Brooklyn, a borough of New York City was home to more than 2.5 million people (see Appendix E, Figure E.1 for a reference map of Brooklyn and New York City). Over the following decade, the borough saw a net loss of more than 360,000 residents. By 2010, Brooklyn would regain most of the population it lost between 1970 and 1980, adding nearly 70,000 between 1980 and 1990, and another 166,000 between 1990 and 2000.¹⁹

In 1970, Brooklyn was more densely populated than it would be in later decades, and there were wider disparities in population density between majority white and majority black neighborhoods. The average population density was 19,737 persons per km² in 1970 across all census tracts; in majority white census tracts population density was 17,863 persons per km² compared to 27,317 persons per square km² in majority black census tracts. Following the overall population loss that occurred between 1970 and 1980, the mean population density across census tracts fell to 16,974 persons per square km² – the disparity by tract racial composition remained (15,019 to 21,279 between

¹⁹ The 2010 U.S. Decennial Census count was formally challenged by the Bloomberg mayoral administration, which cited gross undercounts in the boroughs of Queens and Brooklyn. The U.S. Census Bureau rejected the claim, filed through the Count Question Resolution process. Nevertheless, the NYC Department of City Planning estimated that a more accurate count of the population of Brooklyn in 2010 was 2,552,911 residents ("Decennial Census - Census 2010," 2013).

majority white and majority black tracts in 1980). As the population increased, the population density followed the same trend, returning nearly to 1970 levels by 2010. Between 1970 and 2010, the disparity in population density attenuated slightly, such that the in 2010 mean population density of majority white census tracts was 16,989 persons per km², compared to 19,974 persons per km² in majority black tracts. Population statistics aggregated to the ZCTA level can be found in Appendix C (Table C.1).

Racial Composition

Between 1970 and 2010, the proportion of white residents fell from its high of 73.4% in 1970 to 43.9% in 2010. In 1970, nearly 80% of all census tracts in Brooklyn were majority white, falling to 46.2% in 2010. The share of black residents generally grew from 1970 to 2010, from 25.3% of all Brooklyn residents in 1970 to 34.4% of all residents in 2010. The share of residents identifying as neither black nor white increased to about a fifth of the population in 2010, representing the increase in multiracial and Asian residents in the borough.²⁰

Both the trends over time and the spatial distribution of the white and black population in Brooklyn are demonstrated in Figures 4.1 and 4.2. The choropleth maps capture the proportion white (Figure 4.1) and the proportion black (Figure 4.2) of each

²⁰ The 1970 Decennial Census did not have categories for American Indian, Asian, or other. The options for race/ethnicity were White, Black, Hispanic/Latino, persons of Mexican or Puerto Rican origin, and Spanish American persons. Hispanic/Latino was not mutually exclusive with White or Black, so the counts for Hispanic/Latino will not add to 100% when combined with the proportion of White and Black residents. In 2000, respondents were allowed for the first time to check as many categories for race-ethnicity as accurately represented their heritage (though in the 2000 Census, the check boxes on the form were still restricted to single race categories). The data presented here from 2010 are those that identified as either “Only White” or “Only Black;” therefore multiracial persons are included in the “Other” category. For a broad overview on how Census categories have shifted over time see: Pew Research Center (2015).

census tract in Brooklyn between 1970 and 2010. Through this visualization the spatial segregation between black and white communities is easily identifiable. The black population of Brooklyn is both concentrated and centralized in the north and central area of the borough in zip codes. The majority ($\geq 50\%$) and predominantly ($\geq 80\%$) black tracts are largely contiguous, demonstrating racial residential segregation of black households.

In north and central Brooklyn, the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood (zip codes 11216 and 11233) was at least 80% black at each Census measurement between 1970 and 2010; the population of nearby Crown Heights and Brownsville (zip codes 11225 and 11212) was at least 80% black between 1980 and 2010. In southwest Brooklyn, below Prospect Park and near the Verrazano bridge connecting Brooklyn to the largely suburban borough of Staten Island, the neighborhoods Dyker Heights and Bay Ridge/Fort Hamilton (zip codes 11209 and 11228) remained at least 80% white from 1970 to 2000, and at least 70% white in 2010 (no ZCTA was predominantly white in 2010).

Persons living Below the Poverty Level

Between 1970 and 2010, the share of persons living below the poverty level increased overall throughout the borough. There was attenuation in the black-white disparity in poverty rates during this period, a result of both decreasing poverty rates in majority black areas and increasing poverty rates in majority white areas. In 1970, on average 28 percent of residents in majority black tracts lived below the poverty line, compared with 12.4 percent of residents in majority white tracts. Poverty grew in both white and black neighborhoods by 1980 (15.8 percent in majority white tracts compared to 32.7 percent in majority black tracts). Poverty increased slightly in majority white

tracts (after a small decrease in 1990) to 18.1% in 2000 and 17.0% in 2010. Poverty decreased in black tracts from its high in 1980 to a low of 22.0% in 2010. High-poverty tracts ($\geq 20\%$) were concentrated in the northern half of Brooklyn in 1970 and 1980, with some dispersion throughout the borough after 1990.

Though the Census Bureau uses 20% to identify high poverty areas, some studies use a 40% cut-off to identify areas of hyper-concentrated poverty (Bureau, 2011; Wilson, 1980). In 1970, only one neighborhood had a poverty rate greater than 40% (East New York, 11239), by 1980 it was six neighborhoods (Clinton Hill, 11206; Bushwick, 11207/11237; Williamsburg, 11211; Brownsville, 11212; and Bedford-Stuyvesant, 11221). Hyper-concentrated poverty fell after 1980 to three zip codes in 1990 (Clinton Hill, Williamsburg, and Bushwick), two in 2000 (Clinton Hill and Williamsburg) and just one in 2010 (Clinton Hill).

Table 4.1: Characteristics of Census Tracts Included in the Analysis, by Decade: Brooklyn, New York (1970 - 2010)

| | 1970 | 1980 | 1990 | 2000 | 2010* |
|--|---------------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Number of tracts | 742 | 744 | 743 | 745 | 744 |
| Total population | 2,588,161 | 2,221,887 | 2,290,872 | 2,456,921 | 2,463,828 |
| Mean tract population | 3,470 | 2,979 | 3,071 | 3,294 | 3,303 |
| Mean population density (persons/km ²) | 19,737 | 16,973 | 17,638 | 18,841 | 18,784 |
| Majority white tracts | 17,863 | 15,019 | 14,633 | 16,821 | 16,989 |
| Majority black tracts | 27,317 | 21,279 | 22,038 | 20,867 | 19,974 |
| Persons living in poverty, mean (%) | 15.6 | 22.9 | 20.8 | 23.4 | 20.3 |
| Majority white tracts | 12.4 | 15.8 | 14.5 | 18.1 | 17.0 |
| Majority black tracts | 28.0 | 32.7 | 26.4 | 27.2 | 22.0 |
| Median tract household income ²¹ , \$ | \$9,201 | \$15,185 | \$33,282 | \$44,151 | \$57,483 |
| (Q1, Q3) | (\$7,176, \$11,126) | (\$11,672, \$18,606) | (\$26,339, 40,950) | (\$35,945, 55,238) | (\$47,268, \$73,842) |
| Majority white tracts | \$9,770 | \$17,216 | \$37,397 | \$49,335 | \$67,959 |

²¹ Median household income was used, rather than mean household income, because the distribution of income data was positively skewed for each decade (and increasingly so).

| | 1970 | 1980 | 1990 | 2000 | 2010* |
|--------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Number of tracts | 742 | 744 | 743 | 745 | 744 |
| Majority black tracts | \$6,835 | \$11,779 | \$28,335 | \$39,800 | \$51,878 |
| Racial/ethnic composition, (%) | | | | | |
| % White, all tracts | 73.7 | 56.6 | 46.8 | 42.9 | 43.9 |
| % Black, all tracts | 25.3 | 32.5 | 38.1 | 38.1 | 34.4 |
| % Other, all tracts | 1.0 | 10.9 | 15.1 | 19.0 | 21.7 |
| Majority white tracts | 79.6 | 62 | 54.4 | 46.7 | 46.2 |
| Majority black tracts | 20.1 | 29.5 | 34.4 | 38.7 | 35.8 |
| Majority Hispanic tracts | 5.1 | 10.5 | 11.4 | 11.1 | 9.5 |
| No majority tracts | 1.3 | 8.6 | 11.5 | 14.6 | 18.1 |
| Foreign-born persons, mean (%) | 17.9 | 23.1 | 28.1 | 36.8 | 36.9 |
| (Q1, Q3) | (11.4, 23.2) | (15.1, 29.0) | (17.3, 36.9) | (23.3, 49.7) | (24.3, 49.2) |
| Majority white tracts | 19.3 | 22.5 | 26.4 | 37.0 | 33.8 |
| Majority black tracts | 12.5 | 25.1 | 30.3 | 35.6 | 37.7 |

* 2010 data are based on the 2006-2010 American Community Survey, whereas the data from 1970 to 2000 derive from the Decennial Census.

The tracts with high-poverty were significantly more likely to be higher in proportion of black residents (Table 4.2). For example, in 1970 as census tracts increased in proportion black by ten percentage points, the share of persons living in poverty increased by 2.3 percentage points (p-value <0.001). By 2010 the association between poverty and racial composition remained statistically significant (p-value 0.006), though the magnitude of the relationship attenuated (corresponding to an increase in 0.3 percentage points.).

Table 4.2: Association between Poverty and Racial Composition ^a

| | 1970 | 1980 | 1990 | 2000 | 2010 |
|-----------------------------|----------|----------|---------|---------|---------|
| Racial Composition by tract | | | | | |
| % Black | 0.0023 | 0.0020 | 0.0012 | 0.0008 | 0.0003 |
| Stand. Err | (0.0001) | (0.0001) | (.0001) | (.0001) | (.0001) |
| p-value | < 0.001 | < 0.001 | < 0.001 | < 0.001 | 0.006 |
| % White | -0.0023 | -0.0027 | -.0019 | -0.0015 | -0.0007 |
| Stand. Err | (0.0001) | (0.0001) | (.0001) | (.0001) | (.0001) |
| p-value | < 0.001 | < 0.001 | < 0.001 | < 0.001 | < 0.001 |

a Modeled as a simple linear regression.

Figure 4.1: Percent Black by Census Tract in Brooklyn, New York (1970 to 2010)

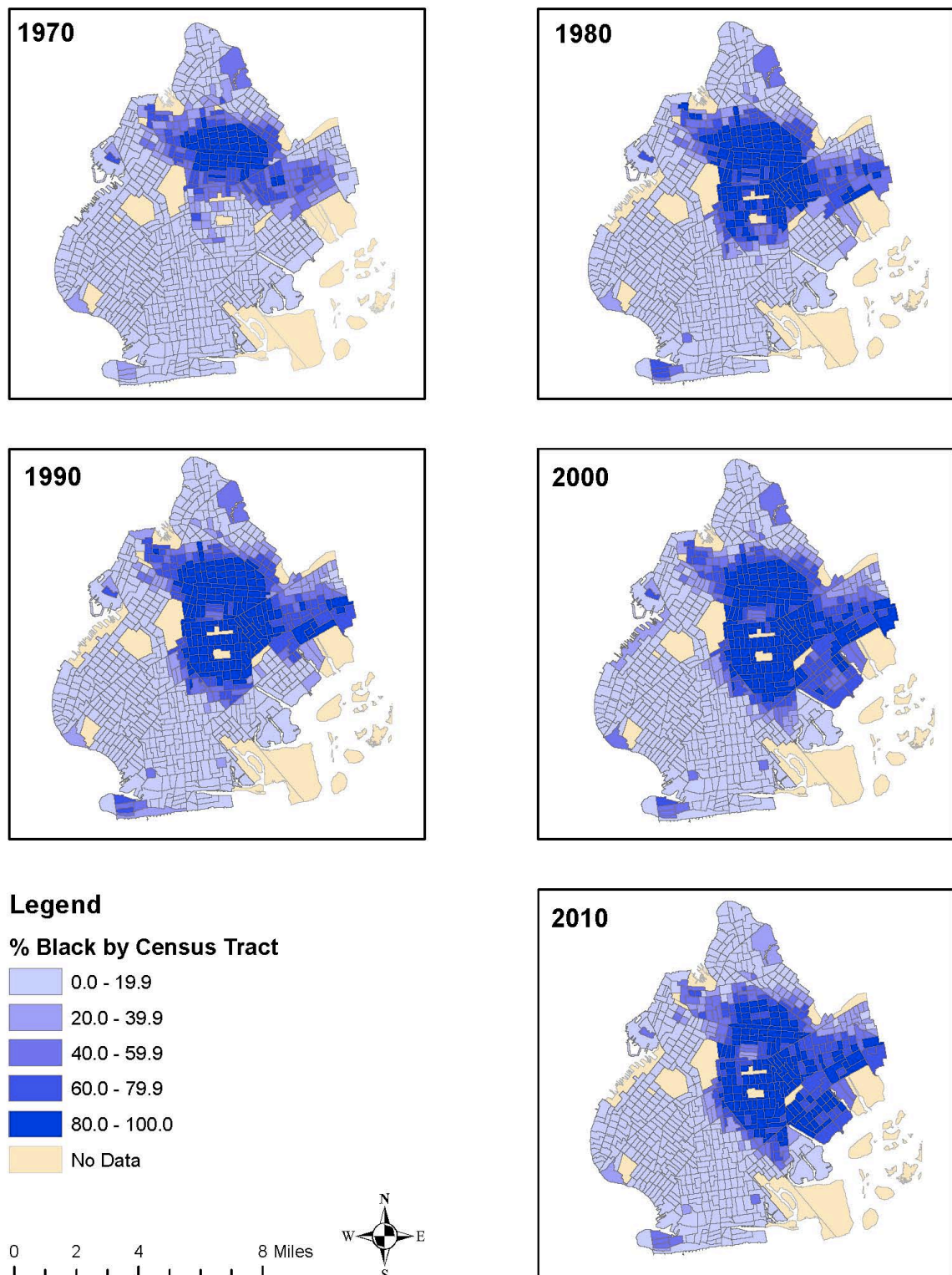


Figure 4.2: Percent White by Census Tract in Brooklyn, New York (1970 to 2010)

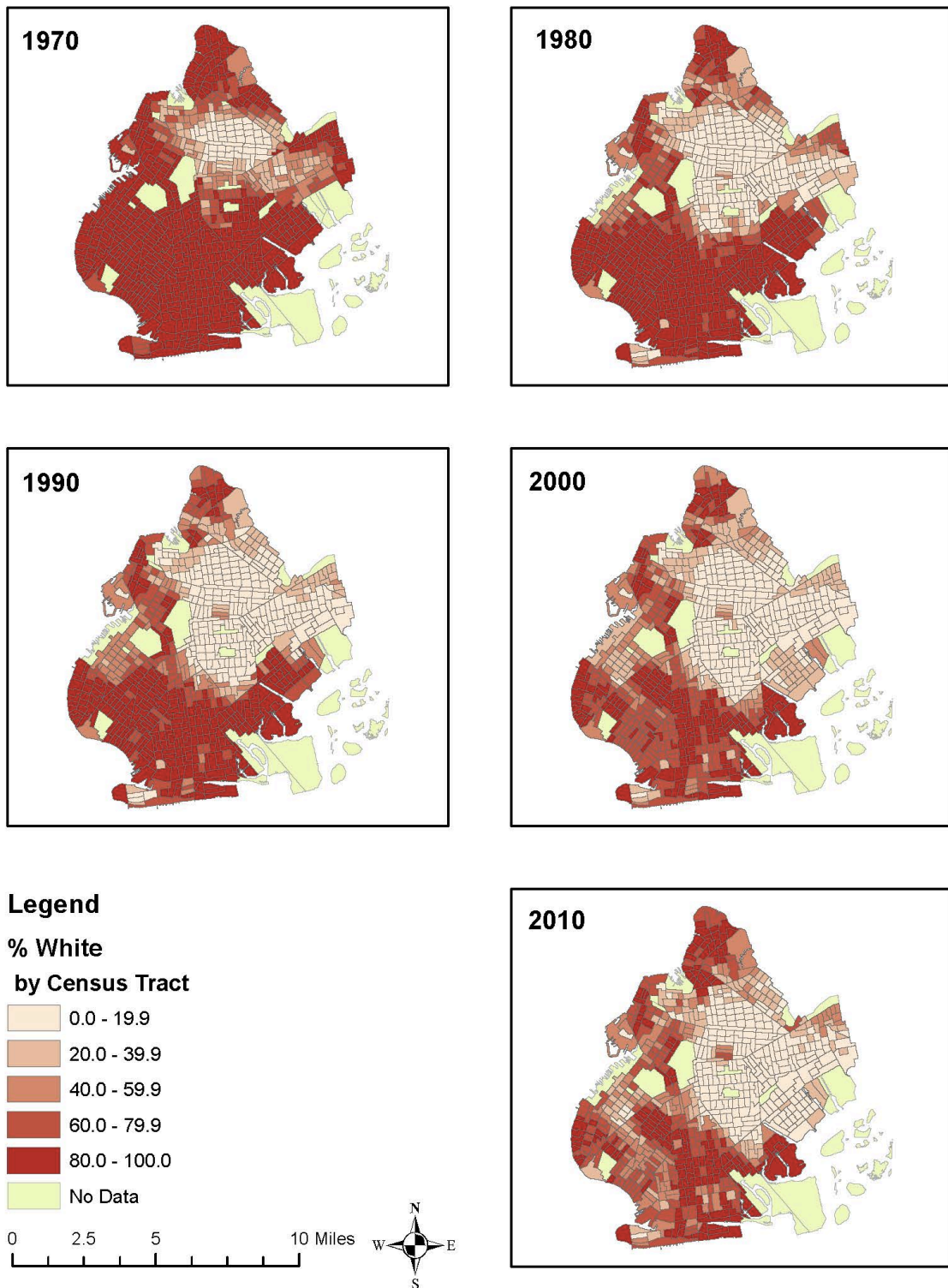
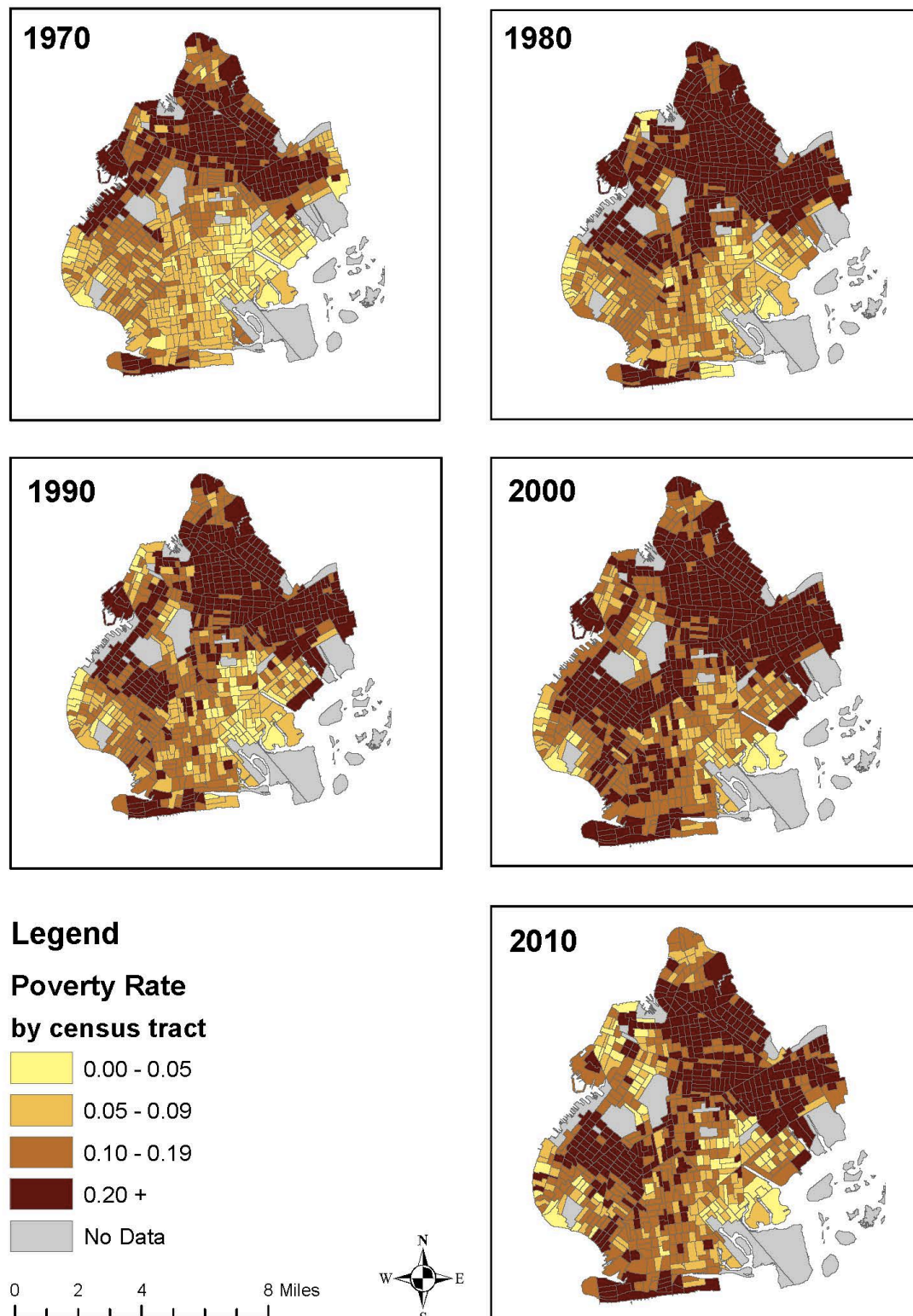


Figure 4.3: Percent of Persons Living Below the Poverty Line, Brooklyn, New York (1970 to 2010)



Supermarket Retail Trends in Brooklyn, New York (1970 – 2010)

As would be expected based on the “food desert” literature, the total number of supermarkets declined in Brooklyn between 1970 and 2010. Using the expanded business list, there were 369 supermarkets in Brooklyn in 1970 compared with 275 in 1980, 231 in 1990, 208 in 2000, and 205 in 2010 (Table 4.3). The original business list shows a decline, as the number of supermarket dropped from 273 to 172 between 1970 and 2010, though the decline was not as steep as that seen in the expanded dataset. Correspondingly, the mean number of supermarkets aggregated both to the census tract and zip code tabulation area (ZCTA)²² declined across the study time period, in both the expanded and original supermarket lists.

Table 4.3: Supermarkets, by census tract and zip code tabulation area (ZCTA)

| | 1970 | 1980 | 1990 | 2000 | 2010 |
|---------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| A. Total Supermarkets, expanded list | 369 | 275 | 231 | 208 | 205 |
| Number of Supermarkets, mean | 0.49 | 0.37 | 0.31 | 0.28 | 0.28 |
| Min, Max per Census Tract | [0, 4] | [0, 3] | [0, 3] | [0, 3] | [0, 3] |
| Number of Supermarkets per ZCTA, mean | 10.25 | 7.4 | 6.2 | 5.6 | 5.5 |
| Min, Max per ZCTA | [1, 18] | [1, 15] | [1, 13] | [1, 12] | [2, 12] |
| B. Total Supermarkets, original list | 273 | 259 | 217 | 193 | 172 |
| Number of Supermarkets, mean | 0.37 | 0.35 | 0.29 | 0.26 | 0.23 |
| Min, Max per Census Tract | [0, 3] | [0, 3] | [0, 3] | [0, 3] | [0, 3] |
| Number of Supermarkets per ZCTA, mean | 7.6 | 7.0 | 5.9 | 5.2 | 4.6 |
| Min, Max per ZCTA | [0, 14] | [1, 15] | [1, 13] | [1, 12] | [1, 11] |

²² The US Census Bureau created the zip code tabulation area (ZCTA) as an aggregation of census tracts to correspond to the area of postal zip codes. Methods can be found at the US Census Bureau website: <https://www.census.gov/geo/reference/zctas.html>

Number of People per Supermarket

The number of mean persons per supermarket was calculated at the tract (Table 4.4) and ZCTA level (Appendix C, Table C.2), by dividing the population count by the number of supermarkets present within the geographic area. Table 4.4 presents the mean persons per supermarket within tracts where at least one supermarket was present, both overall and across socio-demographic categories using the expanded business list.²³ As the total number of supermarkets in Brooklyn declined across the study time period, the mean persons per supermarket increased (meaning there were fewer supermarkets for the population each decade). In 1970 there was on average about 10 supermarkets per ZCTA, the following decade the average fell to 7.4 supermarkets per ZCTA. Between 1990 and 2010, the average number of supermarkets continued to fall, but at a decreasing rate (6.2 supermarkets per ZCTA in 1990; 5.6 supermarkets per ZCTA in 2000; and 5.5 supermarkets per ZCTA in 2010).

Using a two-group mean comparison t-test, the mean persons per supermarket was calculated between majority black and majority white tracts, predominantly white and predominantly black tracts, and higher and lower poverty tracts. Means were also tested between higher poverty majority black tract and lower poverty majority black tracts, and between higher poverty majority white tracts and lower poverty majority white tracts to see how racial composition and poverty interact. Tracts with higher proportion of black residents consistently had higher mean persons per supermarket than majority ($\geq 50\%$) or predominantly ($\geq 80\%$) white tracts across the five time periods. By

²³ The rest of the analysis in this chapter will only use data from the expanded retail list. All analyses were conducted using both lists and found to have very similar trends. Tables using the original list are found in the Appendix D.

2010, the differences were small and not statistically significant. Higher poverty tracts ($\geq 20\%$) also had consistently higher persons per supermarkets compared with lower poverty tracts ($< 20\%$) across all time periods in the study. When differences were tested within majority black and majority white neighborhoods by poverty level, significant differences in person per supermarket was only found between higher and lower poverty black tracts. Higher-poverty majority black tracts had higher persons per supermarket than lower-poverty majority black tracts; these differences were significant in 1970, 2000 and 2010. Persons per supermarket were not significantly different by poverty level in any time period within majority white tracts.

All of these analyses were run using the original supermarket business list as well, and findings are presented in Appendix D. There were no differences in the directions of the relationships or which means were statistically significant between the expanded and original lists. There were, however, differences in the magnitude of person per supermarket (for example, in 1970 person per supermarket was 5,114 in predominantly black tracts and 3,171 in predominantly white tracts using the original list, compared to 4,510 and 2,977 respectively, using the expanded list).

Table 4.4: Persons per Supermarket, by tract characteristics: 1970-2010

| | 1970 | 1980 | 1990 | 2000 | 2010 |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|--------------|-------------------|--------------|----------|
| Total Persons per Supermarket | 3248 | 3069 | 3330 | 3506 | 3502 |
| Majority black tracts | 4,065 | 3,353 | 3,875 | 3,779 | 3,540 |
| Stand. Error | (233.76) | (169.57) | (190.09) | (190.99) | (169.28) |
| Majority white tracts | 3,030 | 2,864 | 2,907 | 3,081 | 3,306 |
| Stand. Error | (96.63) | (114.83) | (131.17) | (159.82) | (149.92) |
| p-value | <i>< 0.001</i> | <i>0.016</i> | <i>< 0.001</i> | <i>0.006</i> | 0.302 |

| | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|
| Predominantly black ($\geq 80\%$) | 4,510 | 3,447 | 3,792 | 3,819 | 3,760 |
| Stand. Error | (345.64) | (188.85) | (210.19) | (255.07) | (254.33) |
| Predominantly white ($\geq 80\%$) | 2,977 | 2,858 | 2,846 | 3,046 | 3,358 |
| Stand. Error | (103.61) | (121.88) | (159.38) | (215.59) | (267.29) |
| p-value | < 0.001 | 0.009 | < 0.001 | 0.026 | 0.279 |
| High-poverty tracts ($\geq 20\%$) | 3,969 | 3,360 | 3,664 | 3,799 | 3,893 |
| Stand. Error | (204.81) | (127.91) | (166.61) | (158.31) | (159.19) |
| Low-poverty tracts ($< 20\%$) | 2,978 | 2,799 | 3,094 | 3,024 | 3,110 |
| Stand. Error | (97.83) | (132.02) | (140.94) | (152.64) | (123.15) |
| p-value | < 0.001 | 0.002 | 0.009 | 0.001 | 0.001 |
| Higher-poverty majority white tracts | 3,375 | 3,150 | 3,169 | 3,129 | 3,643 |
| Stand. Error | (279.48) | (191.22) | (333.71) | (256.42) | (336.07) |
| Lower-poverty majority white tracts | 2,966 | 2,754 | 2,839 | 3,047 | 3,179 |
| Stand. Error | (101.81) | (140.07) | (140.76) | (205.98) | (161.99) |
| p-value | 0.124 | 0.122 | 0.310 | 0.802 | 0.170 |
| Higher-poverty majority black tracts | 4,467 | 3,399 | 3,918 | 4,059 | 3,874 |
| Stand. Error | (275.13) | (183.90) | (227.00) | (243.30) | (223.49) |
| Lower-poverty majority black tracts | 3,104 | 3,182 | 3,819 | 3,087 | 2,949 |
| Stand. Error | (360.26) | (424.63) | (329.10) | (221.59) | (210.82) |
| p-value | 0.007 | 0.604 | 0.799 | 0.020 | 0.007 |

Note: P-value using a two-sided independent group t-test.

Changes in Supermarket Locations by Decade

Supermarket loss was heaviest between 1970 and 1980, when the borough netted a loss of 94 supermarkets (see Table 4.5). Between 1970 and 1980, 130 tracts lost at least one supermarket, while 53 tracts gained at least one supermarket. Among tracts that did not stay constant (tracts that either gained or lost a supermarket) the mean difference per tract was a loss of 0.52 supermarkets. Aggregated to the ZCTA level between 1970 and 1980, the mean loss was nearly 3 supermarkets. Appendix D (Table D.3) present changes in supermarkets per census tract and ZCTA using the original business list.

Between 1980 and 1990 Brooklyn netted an additional loss of 44 supermarkets – dropping from 275 to 231. Across the decade, 77 census tracts lost at least one supermarket, while 38 tracts gained at least one supermarket. The mean change was a loss of .34 supermarkets within tracts that either gained or lost a market. Aggregated to the ZCTA, the mean loss was 1.47 supermarkets.

Between 1990 and 2000 the net loss in supermarkets was 23 stores from 231 to 208, with 54 tracts losing at least one supermarket, and 31 tracts gaining at least one supermarket. The mean loss was 0.28 per tract, and 0.67 per ZCTA. The following decade netted a loss of only three supermarkets, with 32 tracts losing at least one supermarket and 31 tracts gaining a supermarket between 2000 and 2010. The mean change in number of supermarkets was very close to zero at both the tract and ZCTA level (-0.03 and -0.13 stores).

Table 4.5: Changes in Number of Supermarkets per census tract and ZCTA, by decade

| | 1970 to 1980 | 1980 to 1990 | 1990 to 2000 | 2000 to 2010 |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Census Tracts, # | 741 | 743 | 743 | 744 |
| Mean Change in Supermarkets per Tract | -0.52 | -0.37 | -0.28 | -0.03 |
| Min, Max | [-3, 3] | [-2, 2] | [-2, 2] | [-2, 1] |
| Tracts losing supermarkets, # | 130 | 77 | 54 | 32 |
| Tracts gaining supermarkets, # | 53 | 38 | 31 | 31 |
| Tracts with no change, # | 558 | 628 | 658 | 681 |
| ZCTAs, # | 36 | 37 | 37 | 37 |
| Mean Change in Supermarkets per ZCTA | -2.97 | -1.47 | -0.67 | -0.13 |
| Min, Max | [-7, 3] | [-6, 3] | [-5, 3] | [-3, 1] |
| ZCTAs losing supermarkets, # | 29 | 23 | 24 | 12 |
| ZCTAs gaining supermarkets, # | 3 | 7 | 10 | 11 |
| ZCTAs with no change, # | 4 | 7 | 3 | 14 |

Changes in Supermarket Locations by Tract Socio-demographic Characteristics

To describe the neighborhood characteristics of the area that lost or gained supermarkets, the mean change in number of supermarkets between types of neighborhoods was calculated and compared using a two-group independent t-test aggregated at both the census tract (Appendix C, Table C.3) and ZCTA (Table 4.6). On average, majority white tracts net lost more supermarkets than majority non-white tracts across each decade, indicating supermarket loss may have been greatest in majority white neighborhoods. Mean losses in were highest between 1970 and 1980, when majority white ZCTAs lost 3.21 supermarkets and majority black ZCTAs lost 2.25 supermarkets. During that time period, predominantly white ZCTAs lost on average 3.13 supermarkets, and predominantly black ZCTAs saw zero net change in mean number of supermarkets.

The mean changes in number of supermarkets per tract and per ZCTA across socio-economic characteristics were tested by comparing the mean differences between higher and lower-poverty tracts and below and above median household income tracts. Both indicators show a general trend that supermarket losses were greater in higher-income and lower-poverty tracts across the decade. Between 1970 and 1980 the mean change among higher-poverty ZCTAs was a loss of 1.6 supermarkets, whereas lower-poverty ZCTAs lost 3.6 supermarkets. Similarly, ZCTAs earning on average below the median household income lost 1.9 supermarkets, and ZCTAs above the median average household income lost 3.9 supermarkets between 1970 and 1980. Lower-poverty/higher-income ZCTAs consistently saw a greater loss in mean number of supermarkets compared with higher-poverty/lower-income ZCTAs across the study period. There is some evidence that higher-poverty and lower-income ZCTAs may have net gained

supermarkets between 1990 to 2000 and 2000 to 2010. Appendix D (Table D.4 and Table D.5) presents the changes in supermarkets at the ZCTA and census tract level. The same general trends were found using the original business list.

Table 4.6: Changes in Number of Supermarkets by ZCTA characteristics: 1970 to 2010

| | 1970 to 1980 | 1980 to 1990 | 1990 to 2000 | 2000 to 2010 |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| ZCTAs, number | 32 | 30 | 34 | 23 |
| Majority white | -3.21 | -1.89 | -1.00 | -0.62 |
| Not majority white | -2.25 | -0.83 | -0.31 | 0.50 |
| p-value | 0.342 | 0.205 | 0.213 | 0.031 |
| Majority black | -2.25 | -0.70 | -0.58 | 0.00 |
| Not majority black | -3.21 | -1.85 | -0.73 | -0.17 |
| p-value | 0.342 | 0.183 | 0.805 | 0.799 |
| Predominantly white ($\geq 80\%$) | -3.13 | -3.00 | -1.13 | --* |
| Not predominantly white ($< 80\%$) | -2.60 | -0.91 | -0.54 | |
| p-value | 0.57 | 0.019 | 0.369 | |
| Predominantly black ($\geq 80\%$) | 0.00 | -0.67 | -1.00 | 0.00 |
| Not predominantly black ($< 80\%$) | -3.17 | -1.67 | -0.593 | -0.14 |
| p-value | 0.074 | 0.329 | 0.554 | 0.882 |
| Higher-poverty ($\geq 20\%$) | -1.60 | -1.11 | -0.12 | 0.15 |
| Lower-poverty ($< 20\%$) | -3.59 | -2.00 | -1.24 | -1.50 |
| p-value | 0.029 | 0.288 | 0.038 | 0.012 |
| Below median income | -1.93 | -1.06 | -0.24 | 0.07 |
| Above median income | -3.88 | -1.93 | -1.12 | -0.44 |
| p-value | 0.021 | 0.292 | 0.106 | 0.347 |

Note: P-value using a two-sided independent group t-test.

* No ZCTA in 2000 was predominantly white ($\geq 80\%$) and so the comparison of means could not be made.

4-3 Policy Discourse Analysis

Overview

The purpose of the following sections is to describe the evolving discourse on the problems of urban supermarket access in the 1960s through the 1990s, including the forums in which this discourse occurred, the interest groups and political actors that contributed to it, and the varying positions taken on the problem and its solutions within and across those groups. Moving from description to analysis, the stories and arguments put forth in this discourse will be examined for its use of strategic representation, following the framework designed by Stone. The various arguments and narratives will be further analyzed in their “nested context,” meaning, the political, social and economic climate of the time will aid in the analysis of their claims and the cultural values embedded therein (Schön & Rein, 1994a).

In *The Policy Paradox*, Stone provides a framework for the political analysis of policy narratives – the purpose of which is to understand how these stories are strategic representations meant to advance the interests of the storyteller (Stone, 1997). Central to this analysis is how narratives assign blame for causing the problem and responsibility in fixing it. The following analysis applies Stone’s framework to the historical discourse on urban supermarket access, particularly focusing on how policy narratives by stakeholder groups assign or deflect blame for creating unequal food urban landscapes and identify who or what is responsible for improving urban food access.

The findings are initially organized by decade; this structure provides insight into the key conversations that were occurring between interest groups vying over the dominant narrative about the problems of and solutions to urban supermarket access at a

given time. It is also possible to trace the evolution of the discourse – identifying which assumptions or conditions remained stable over time and which changed. Following the analysis by decade is a summary of the key developments of supermarket access discourse over the study time period.

To summarize, the main finding of this discourse analysis is that while the conditions of poor supermarket access in the inner city remained relatively stable from the 1960s through the 1990s, the public policy “problem” of supermarket access evolved across the decades and led to policy solutions with important differences in their implications for racial and economic equality. Namely, supermarkets in black neighborhoods remained more likely to be small, outdated, and offer inferior service and product quality compared with supermarkets in white urban areas. One key shift in the discourse occurred in the representation of the supermarket industry and of inner city residents as either sympathetic or problematic figures. Policy solutions were directly tied to how each interest group was constructed, whether as victim or villain. When poor and black inner city residents were seen as sympathetic victims of exploitation in the 1960s, the policy prescriptions by public officials and advocates focused on government protection for poor consumers and the policy discourse examined the origins of racial inequality in American cities. By the following decade, after the urban riots of the 1960s and accelerated white and middle-class flight from cities, the focus of the “problem” shifted from the conditions faced by poor consumers to the conditions faced by supermarket operators in the inner city. The industry described the city as an inhospitable place for business, and the policy discourse centered around how government, communities and business could work together to make the city more attractive for

supermarket development. The supermarket industry, villainized for discriminatory operations in the 1960s, positioned itself by the 1990s as an integral part of the solution for feeding urban communities and redeveloping the inner city.

Accompanying these changes in the supermarket policy discourse was a parallel public discourse (and changing policy landscape) about the role of government in providing for the welfare of its citizens. While the language of protection and rights dominated in the 1960s, an apparent consensus emerged in later decades that an appropriate role of government was to facilitate the private market by reducing development impediments and offering services to businesses interested in inner city investment. Such public-private partnerships with the supermarket industry was presented as a win-win-win scenario for poor communities, the supermarket industry, and embattled municipalities – underserved communities would have access to healthy food at affordable prices, as well as new employment opportunities; supermarkets would have easier access to enter into profitable urban markets; and new supermarkets could serve as an anchor institution, attracting reinvestment to America's beleaguered inner cities.

Few voices questioned the logic of this argument; anti-hunger and food policy advocates, particularly after the 1980s, espoused this same position in their reports and at Congressional hearings about how to solve urban hunger and improve access to high quality, reasonably priced food. The only consistent dissent came from civil rights organizations and black entrepreneurs in the grocery industry. Civil rights groups, much like the general discourse of the 1960s, identified policy solutions that more directly and explicitly addressed inequality and promoted self-determination and wealth creation within poor communities. Black supermarket insiders argued that the mainstream

supermarket industry avoided black neighborhoods based on racial stereotypes, not because those neighborhoods were “hostile” to business. Across the decades, poor access to credit was consistently cited as a barrier for black entrepreneurs to develop supermarkets and for community groups to develop market alternatives that fostered self-determination, such as food co-operatives. These voices, however, remained on the periphery of the urban supermarket access policy discourse.

4-4 The 1960s: The Poor Consumer and the Explosive City

Overview

Throughout the 1960s, consumer advocates, civil rights organizations, and residents of America’s “inner cities” leveled troubling allegations against the supermarket industry. Chain supermarkets were accused of selling inferior products, in dirty and disordered surroundings, at unfairly high prices to the mostly black and poor households of central cities. The most egregious charge was that chain supermarkets would raise their prices in black high poverty neighborhood stores to coincide with the distribution of welfare checks in those areas. Sociologist David Caplovitz had provided evidence in his 1963 seminal work, *The Poor Pay More*, that exploitation and unfair conditions were endemic to the “ghetto” marketplace (Caplovitz, 1965). The urban civil disorders and mass protests by black Americans that began in 1964 transformed this academic question into a social one – the experience of exploitation in the marketplace of the poor was recognized widely as fodder for frustration and anger that was periodically expressed in urban civil unrest nationwide in the latter half of the decade. Though Caplovitz had

focused on exploitation in the market for durable and household goods, later studies responded to common complaints that the poor also paid more for groceries (e.g. Goodman, 1968; Marcus, 1969; Sexton Jr, 1971). Supermarkets and independent grocers alike were specifically targeted during riots across the country, and the allegations of their unethical behavior were frequently cited in case studies of the disorders as a root cause of anger among inner city residents. An investigation of the effect of the riots on the supermarket industry by *Food Topics*, a grocery trade publication, in 1967 quoted the Director of Newark's Interracial Council for Business Opportunity and Development, as saying, "The food industry has contributed to, and in a sense, caused, rioting" [4].

Though the supermarket industry was plainly aware of the danger of such accusations and associations, its representatives publicly denied engaging in such behavior and provided an alternative narrative about the problems of urban supermarkets. From their perspective, chain supermarkets faced a series of interrelated obstacles to successful and profitable operations in the inner city; among them were difficulties hiring qualified workers, higher security and insurance costs, and trouble acquiring large enough parcels of land. The poor might be paying more for food, not because chain stores were raising prices, but rather because smaller, less efficient independent markets operated in ghetto areas where the higher prices were simply a reflection of their weaker buying power. The solution to the concerning problem of feeding the inner city poor was, therefore, increased access to the most efficient food distribution model – the American supermarket. According to supermarket industry lobbyists, the government had a role in helping supermarkets be successful in the inner city through a variety of policies that would create a business friendly environment. A modern supermarket would bring jobs,

low-priced food, and economic vitality to poor districts, thus easing the tensions of the inner city and creating a more orderly society [6,133].

How could these two perspectives be reconciled – the chain supermarket constructed as both the problem and the solution? The nuances of this debate can be found in the internal documents of the supermarket industry, as well as the public forums in which the industry, government, and public interest groups met to exchange perspectives and advocate for policy responses. Municipal governments and local civic organizations engaged themselves with answering the questions – do the poor pay more for food, and if so, why? – through studies and consumer action throughout the late 1960s. Often these investigations were conducted through the local community action groups created by the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), a key agent in President Johnson Administration’s War on Poverty.

The federal government hosted at least two major forums where the supermarket industry, consumers, and civil rights advocates could testify before an investigatory committee about the conditions of the ghetto marketplace for food. In 1967, Congress launched a Special Inquiry headed by Chairman Benjamin Rosenthal to investigate the charges of supermarket price discrimination, which held four hearings between 1967 and 1968, entitled *Consumer Problems of the Poor: Supermarket Operations in Low-Income Areas and the Federal Response* (hereafter “Consumer Problems of the Poor”) [6]. At the same time, the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders held hearings in 1967, and published what is now commonly referred to as the “Kerner Report” in 1968 to ask why urban riots had taken place across the nation in the summer of 1967 and to identify what could be done to prevent them from happening again [133, 134]. The hearing of the

National Advisory Commission devoted a session to focus on the allegations of exploitation in the ghetto marketplace in general and in food stores in particular, and provided the supermarket industry a forum to defend itself against those charges. In 1969, the U.S. Senate hosted a hearing of the newly formed Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs to investigate a growing recognition of hunger and malnutrition in America, particularly in rural areas and the nation's inner cities [95].

The question, “do the poor pay more for food,” was asked in many forums and part of several local to federal investigations, was a difficult empirical question to answer. Why price differences might exist, however, was a political and social question that engendered a policy discourse with competing perspectives, assumptions about reality, and guiding values.

What is the “Ghetto”? Why the “inner city”?

During the 1960s the terms “ghetto” and “slum” were used to refer to impoverished inner city areas inhabited by racial and ethnic minorities. The Kerner Report made explicit the meaning of the word “ghetto” within the report: “The term “ghetto” as used in this Report refers to an area within a city characterized by poverty and acute social disorganization and inhabited by members of a racial or ethnic group under conditions of involuntary segregation” [134]. Other documents refer to the “Negro ghetto” or the “black ghetto” to describe the areas where exploitation in the marketplace (and civil disorders) occurred. To both maintain the language of the original discourse, and to retain the specific concepts that language referenced, the present analysis will use these terms where appropriate. The concept of the “ghetto” is essential in understanding the

debate over the problems of urban supermarkets in the 1960s and later. The Kerner Report devotes much of its pages to documenting the formation of and conditions of life in the racial ghetto, as a way to fully explain the inequality and injustice that existed in black urban districts. These conditions were not reducible to the concentration of poverty in black urban areas – they were an artifact of the racist policies and practices that both divested wealth from black Americans and restricted their housing mobility to older ‘slums’ in the central areas of industrial cities. Because black households of both professional and working classes were typically restricted to central city districts, “inner city” became another way to reference a predominantly black urban area. The “inner city” is also used in the discourse on urban supermarkets in this and later eras, though the terms ghetto and slum have lost currency and are now seen as pejorative²⁴.

The Kerner Report clearly identified the formation of the urban racial ghetto at the heart of the constellation of problems that provoked civil disorders and violence in the streets of America. The introduction to the Report states: “Segregation and poverty have created in the racial ghetto a destructive environment totally unknown to most white Americans. What white Americans have never fully understood - but what the Negro can never forget - is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it” [134]. The Report devotes a chapter to explaining the formation of the ghetto, and in particular how the experience of black migrants differed from that of earlier waves of white ethnic immigration. Displaced from Southern farmland and seeking well-paying jobs in northern cities, millions of black migrants clustered in aging central cities, or in the vacancies left

²⁴ See the background chapter of this monograph for a more in-depth account of the term “ghetto” and its public and academic discourses.

behind when white ethnic households moved to the suburbs. Housing discrimination and the threat of white violence restricted even middle class and high earning black households to over-crowded and high poverty central city neighborhoods.

By definition, racial ghettos were places where the free market did not truly function – households typically were unable to access fair credit regardless of income, or to freely choose the neighborhood they wanted to live in. A series of professions and interests arose to profit from that market failure. In Philadelphia, like other inner cities, housing immobility meant rents were high in the poor districts [131]. Rents, therefore, were difficult for tenants to meet and for landlords to collect. Thus, an economy of rent collection, as other types of debt collection, emerged in the inner city. A report written after a 1964 riot in North Philadelphia explained that in the inner city, “a vicious system of rent collection has developed... By law, a tenant is obliged to pay his rent even when the landlord does not live up to his obligations (i.e., fails to provide heat, hot water, proper maintenance or even safe condition). The landlord often hires a "manager" who collects the rent for him and is paid 6 per cent of it for his trouble” [131]. Often these managers were also constables of the court who made their fees off the numbers of notices processed. They were even authorized to repossess the household items of tenants overdue in their rent, often selling those possessions on the sidewalk in front of the residence in arrears [131].

The white exodus out of the city was also not the result of a free market – massive investment from the federal government was poured into the new housing market in the suburbs. The report on North Philadelphia’s riot explains how this aid to new housing construction in the suburbs devalued old city properties, leaving banks reluctant to

refinance home improvement projects [131]. Many white households who preferred to stay in the city, but did not have the large down payment necessary for conventional mortgages or the cash to renovate older housing stock, ended up leaving the city as well. Black households by and large did not have this option, and so they took over the aging properties as white ethnics left. Several reports that documented riots in individual cities explain the deteriorated physical conditions of inner city neighborhoods in great detail [131, 133, 135]. The North Philadelphia report described the hazardous living environment found in segregated black neighborhoods: “Seventy per cent of the residential fires in Philadelphia occur in the Negro slums as do 80 per cent of child fatalities from lead poisoning, and all deaths by rat bite. Overcrowding is common, with as many as seven persons occupying a single room” [131]. The Kerner report related the incidence of rat bites to “grossly inadequate” garbage collection and sanitation services in black neighborhoods [134].

The Inner City: An Environment Where ‘Exploitative Practices Flourish’

The residents of inner cities lived and shopped in a marketplace where, in the words of the Kerner report, “exploitative practices flourish” [134]. Consumers in this marketplace were vulnerable to exploitation in multiple, interrelated ways. Poor families in central cities often lacked mobility to access merchants outside their neighborhood and for those who could, other barriers remained. A primary barrier was the need for credit – poor families typically lacked the cash on hand to purchase big-ticket items outright or to qualify for credit at good terms through large firms, and were therefore dependent on credit schemes offered by local independent merchants. Such need for credit made poor

families vulnerable to unfair (and in some cases, illegal) credit arrangements, which advantaged independent merchants [134].

Caplovitz detailed problems in the market for durable goods in his study, *The Poor Pay More*, demonstrating how the poor paid significantly higher prices for products like furniture than consumers in middle class areas (Caplovitz, 1965). They were also at risk for losing their investment and having their purchase repossessed if they were late or short in payment. Often the products were shoddily made and so the consumer would refuse to pay on principle, which could result in penalties as severe as wage garnishment. Such credit schemes were also found in independent grocery stores – unlike at national chains, poor consumers could often buy on credit with a local merchant when savings had run out before the next paycheck arrived. There were allegations that the merchants were overcharging on their bills or imposing high interest rates, but the lack of transparency left poor consumers often suspicious of how accurately their accounts were managed [6]. According to an investigation in *Food Topics* magazine, a trade publication read by members of the grocery industry, “Many such customers, even when they suspect that they are being cheated, submit to the abuse because they can't pay cash and can't get credit elsewhere” [4].

During the hearings that contributed to the production of the Kerner Report, Roy Wilkins, then executive secretary of the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), probed witnesses Dr. Caplovitz and Earl Johnson of the OEO on the connection between these charges of exploitation and the civil disorders in black urban areas. He asked, “Can you differentiate between the exploitation of the poor and the exploitation of the Negro poor? And unless you can do that, you can't help us very

much except to say that poverty irritates poor Negroes as well as it irritates poor white people. But unquestionably we are going to report that this is a factor, just as the report of the Watts riot, the McCone Report did. But if we can show that it has a special applicability to the Negro poor, and therefore would goad them -- why doesn't it goad the white poor to riots?" [133].

Wilkins stressed that answering this question was precisely the purpose of the Hearings, and that the riots were not reducible to the effects of poverty on a population. Mr. Johnson and Dr. Caplovitz in response shared the perspective that segregation had created dense, geographically bound communities where exploitation occurred, and that black consumers living in segregated districts did not have many options as poor whites may have had to escape that exploitation. Dr. Caplovitz explained the differences between white and black urban poverty: "The white poor by any sociological or economic study would be shown to live not in as concentrated areas as the Negro poor are forced to live because of housing segregation, et cetera. And as a result, we have a very visible Negro ghetto community in which these exploitive merchants are concentrated, and so from these practices, there are riots. There may be one million whites victimized just as there are one million Negroes in the same ways, but if each one of those live in a little town by themselves there is not likely to be a riot in that town but if you have a million people living in the same neighborhood then there may very well be a riot" [133].

By most accounts, property destruction during the riots nationwide was largely directed against the local retailers that were accused of engaging in unethical behavior. During the Consumer Problems of the Poor hearings, consumer advocates from Watts (a

neighborhood in Los Angeles) testified that one chain had three markets in the riot area that were untouched, while five stores from another chain were burned or destroyed [6]. The *Food Topics* investigation, found that in Watts, while many stores were damaged inadvertently when neighboring buildings were targeted, there was “no doubt among those persons interviewed by *Food Topics* that of the 80 food stores burned - both supermarket chains and independents and the mom-and-pops - the burning was highly selective [4]. The stores included those suspected of exploiting and those who were not involved in community activities.” The destruction was not solely directed at white retailers; markets owned by middle-class black retailers also burned during the riots if they were perceived as abusive or exploitative.

A report on the Detroit Race Riot of 1967 written by a local progressive labor activist made the same point: “The merchants who felt the greatest fury of the uprising were those who were most mercenary in the community. Although the largest number attacked were white establishments, the attacks were economic not racist. Black enterprises that made a habit of gouging the ghetto were also put to fire. Consistently sacked and burned as the uprisings spilled over into other ghettos were the largest and richest stores, both independently and nationally owned. Chain supermarkets and independently owned superettes²⁵ were among the particular objects of the rebelling population. These have been treating the Black people worse than animals, selling them rancid food and rotten meat at exorbitant prices, without even bothering to clear the accumulated garbage from the floors” [135]. In North Philadelphia, black merchants placed signs in their store windows to communicate that the establishment was under black ownership in hopes it would be spared [131]. The post-riot report indicates that the

²⁵ *Superette* is a regional term for a smaller convenience-style grocery store.

black-owned stores that did burn were those where merchants were unable to post these signs. Therefore, at least in North Philadelphia, “clearly the enemy was not all merchants, or even all bad merchants, but the white merchants; not all owners of property, but the white establishment, most visible, best symbolized and most vulnerable behind the plate glass windows in the black ghetto” [131].

The Kerner Report was more cautious in connecting riot damage to the practices of merchants in black urban districts. The report acknowledges that rioters had focused on stores that they “apparently believed had been charging exorbitant prices or selling inferior goods” and suggested that black inner city residents “believe they suffer constant abuses by local merchants,” but concluded that not all commercial destruction should be understood as “revenge” for unethical merchant behavior [134]. It might rather have been the result of a general manifestation of anger and distrust between white owners and black customers, as “the fact that most of the merchants who operate stores in Negro areas are white undoubtedly contributes to the conclusion among Negroes that they are exploited by white society” [134].

A study by the Urban League following the civil disorders in Detroit in 1967 found that respondents reported the most distrust of food merchants compared to any other type of retailer, and more than half of the respondents felt grocery stores had treated them unfairly. Most surveyed felt that distrust of merchants had “a great deal” or at least “something” to do with the causes for the disturbances in Detroit [134].

Allegations Against Inner City Supermarket Chains

The specific complaints made against urban supermarket chains included allegations of price discrimination, poor quality of merchandise, and poor overall conditions within the supermarkets located in poverty and predominantly black areas as compared with stores in middle income and white areas. The most troubling charge among them, and the allegation at the center of the Consumer Problems of the Poor hearings in 1967 and 1968, was that “ghetto” area chain supermarkets would systematically raise the price of food to correspond with the distribution of welfare checks to the urban poor. A representative of the Near Northeast Democratic Central Committee in Washington D.C., Marguerite Kelly, shared testimony about the results of their local investigation into these charges before the Congressional Committee in 1967. Buying the same market basket of foods in the same chains markets in neighborhoods across the capital before and after welfare checks were issued, the study demonstrated an increase in the price of food as expected in the poverty area stores. Mrs. Kelly referred to the 9.1 percent increase in price as a “poverty tax” on local residents [6].

Across American cities, civic groups and government bodies conducted similar price discrimination studies among their local chains. At the Consumer Problems of the Poor hearing, witnesses reported on the results of such studies conducted in New York City, Washington D.C., St. Louis, and Cleveland. Dr. Timothy Costello, the Deputy Mayor of New York City testified at these hearings, when they were held in Harlem in November 1967, detailing a city-led study on 25 supermarkets “in the ghetto area” several days before and after welfare checks were issued [6]. The study found evidence of price differentiation as alleged. Though, given the limitations of their study, he

concluded that; “in honesty and in deference to the need to nail down things on a scientific basis, I am required by the evidence to indicate that I do not have any signs of any systematic price variations across a chainstore network” [6]. Evidence of price differences, were nevertheless alarming, and Dr. Costello called for more research to uncover if systematic discrimination might explain any variations in prices across New York City neighborhoods [6].

A related accusation was that supermarket cashiers in poor neighborhoods would purposefully ring up the items at higher prices in the checkout lanes. At the Consumer Problems of the Poor hearings, Representative Henry Reuss of Wisconsin probed an industry representative on the potential for “price gouging” in this way by manager “anxious to maximize profits,” since the calculator tape would only show the cost of an item, not an enumeration of which items had been sold. Industry representatives denied there would be any incentive for such behavior; meanwhile, housewives testifying at the hearing gave first-hand accounts of being over-charged at the register. A New York City resident who worked with the local consumer education program spoke up from the back of the room during the hearing in Harlem to provide evidence that the over-charging was willful, though it was difficult for shoppers to prove it, particularly those shopping for larger families: “We had a girl come into our education program and told us she worked for one of the chains and was told by the manager to add on 69 cents to every purchase. We are dealing with people in our particular area where they have from five to 10 children the family, so when this person goes to the store they won't buy just a few items they can really check” [6].

Chain supermarkets in poverty areas were also accused of either not reducing the prices on sale items as advertised, or not stocking the item at all. In New York City the Director of a local consumer education program testified: “we found the practice to be in a large number of stores is that these stores will advertise sales in the paper to get people to come into the stores, but the items in the stores are marked incorrectly” [6]. Across the country in California, the Director of the Watts Consumer Action Demonstration made a similar allegation that Safeway never offered their specials in the low-income neighborhoods [6].

Chain supermarkets in poverty areas were consistently accused of selling inferior quality produce and meats. Poor consumers and their advocates accounted for the low quality food in their markets by charging that chain supermarkets would ship unsold or damaged produce from white area supermarkets into the markets in black neighborhoods. Dr. Caplovitz testified to this general suspicion before the National Commission on Civil Disorders in 1967, saying: “A common practice, a complaint that I have heard quite often from ghetto housewives refers to the fact that the chain stores view their low-income outlets as dumping ground for meats and fresh vegetables that are beginning to spoil, and the housewives discover that they are buying day-old bread or vegetables that are beginning to spoil at roughly the same prices that are being charged in the outlets in better income areas” [133]. Consumer representatives and housewives testified before the Congressional Committee that fruits and vegetables appeared “older and dirtier in the inner-city store” and that the conditions of the store themselves was dirty, crowded and disordered [6]. Though not explicitly supporting the allegation that supermarkets shipped lower-quality food to poor neighborhoods, NYC Deputy Mayor Dr. Costello concluded

before the Committee that, “It's in quality particularly that supermarkets in the ghetto areas don't come up to the supermarkets in other areas of the city” [6].

Grassroots consumer groups reported that residents voicing these issues often had trouble finding a government agency or supermarket representative to respond to their allegations and complaints. The director of an East Harlem consumer action group, MEND, explained to the Congressional Committee that they provided the results of their study to the NYC Department of Markets and the Better Business Bureau, which expressed interest but did not follow up with any actions. [6] According to Mr. Press of MEND, “We turned to the Better Business Bureau, and this agency never inspected the matter at first hand at all; they simply talked to the executives at the A. & P., gave us the A. & P.'s version of the story (which we already knew), and said they trusted the matter had been explained to our satisfaction. The New York State Attorney General's office and the Federal Trade Commission were of no help either. The false advertising was a fact, we had proof of it, but no one was interested” [6]. Housewives who spoke at the hearing expressed doubt that they would be helped if they contacted the departments available for consumer complaints [6]. This concern was echoed in the post-riot report about Philadelphia from 1964, which explained: “Perhaps the most important fact about consumer relations in North Philadelphia is that most people are either unaware that there are agencies to help them or have no faith in their desire to do so. They rarely call upon the services of private and quasi-public organizations like the Better Business Bureau and the Legal Aid Society” [131]. The experience of exploitation or discrimination at the hands of local merchants was likely compounded by a sense that there was little recourse for their problems, either from the supermarkets or from government agencies.

The Supermarket Industry Denies all Charges of Wrong Doing

Industry representatives, from store managers to corporate representatives, categorically denied any wrongdoing at the both the Consumer Problems of the Poor hearings, and the hearings held before the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders. They had no knowledge of illegal or unethical behavior occurring in any store, denied that there were inducements for such behavior, and expressed insult to their integrity and reputation to be accused of such behavior. Part of the industry defense seemed to be some variation on the argument that the grocery business was an honorable industry, the allegations described dishonorable behavior, and so therefore they must not be true. Occasional anomalies in prices between stores were consistently explained by simple human error by store operators and chain executives at hearings nationwide [6].

At the Consumer Problems of the Poor hearings, the supermarket chain Safeway was initially represented by its general legal counsel, Mr. Robert Van Gemert. Mr. Van Gemert, who was based on the West Coast, strongly denied the allegations his company had been accused of in its Washington D.C. area stores before the Committee – he claimed, “I studied the matter at length before I came here and it was apparent to me that this was a question of credibility or, possibility, even dishonesty. From our standpoint, if the charge were correct, it would have to mean dishonesty on Safeway's part. I tended to reject that because I know what our operation is and what our uniform pricing policies are around the country, but I did not close my mind” [6]. For his investigation, Mr. Van Gemert checked the stores’ books, and from that evidence deducted that Safeway’s uniform pricing policy had been applied in all cases [6].

The Congressmen were not pleased that Safeway sent their general counsel to testify, a corporate employee with no intimate knowledge of its day-to-day business operations. When Mr. Van Gemert denied any purposeful, systematic price discrimination, his best defense was that he knew it could not be true, because these practices were inconsistent with company policy [6]. He checked the books of the Washington D.C. area stores where specific allegations had been made and everything appeared to be in order. And, lastly, the allegations could not be true because he knew the integrity of the businessmen involved. In response, Representatives Reuss and Chairman Rosenthal openly voiced their discontent, accusing Mr. Van Gemert of repeating “hearsay” evidence. Representative Reuss further pushed Mr. Van Gemert, asking him: “Let, me ask you this, based upon knowledge of how it operates, if a large national chain were in the business of systematically discriminating against low-income people by jacking up the prices of food on welfare check day, you would not expect them to memorialize it and to incorporate that in their books and records, would you?” Mr. Van Gemert conceded the point, but maintained his denial, offering to testify to that effect under oath if necessary [6].

Aside from outright denial, industry representatives explained how price discrimination was either not a good business strategy or not possible given their distribution systems. A manager in a Washington D.C. supermarket chain explained that if he encouraged his employees to raise prices against company policy, it would ultimately harm his operation: “There would be no way I could control my help. So I would say it would be quite foolish for me to raise prices. I would lose more than I would ever hope to gain, plus if the company would catch me, I would lose my bonus

completely” [6]. An owner of a New York based co-operative chain supermarket echoed a similar sentiment – that overcharging, besides being unethical, would not be a successful business practice in the long-term: “We invested a lot of money. We can't be a success by overcharging. I maintain in the long run if the consumer itself is a pretty good judge, all she has to do is stop buying in a store that doesn't treat her right” [6].

In St. Louis, regional manager of operations for the Kroger chain, Walter White, denied the allegation that chains shipped their poor quality perishable foods that hadn't sold in higher income neighborhoods to their poverty area stores [6]. He denied it on principle, that it wasn't a business practice they would choose to do, but also on the grounds that it could not be done with their wholesale system: “It would be impossible for us to selectively single out any inferior merchandise in this rapid and voluminous operation, and send it into the low-income neighborhood stores, even if we wanted to. But, the important thing is this: We don't want to. Our business is based on repeated patronage. Unless we continue to satisfy our customers, no matter who they are and no matter where they live, they can quickly take their business elsewhere” [6].

Representatives from a local St. Louis consumer action group also presented testimony at the Hearing were that directly countered this claim. They reported that during an interview with Kroger, the vice president had claimed that there was no inter-shipping between chain stores, but was corrected by a local store manager, that in fact it did occur. This issue was not resolved at the Hearing. However, the allegations were not limited to Kroger's operations in St. Louis – the Division Manager of National Food Market, also in St. Louis, made a similar declaration of denial and insult in his statement: “But a transfer made for the purpose of getting rid of inferior merchandise by sending it to a poor district,

that charge, Mr. Chairman, my company denies, and I personally deeply resent it from the standpoint of being a good businessman.” Similar accusations had been made against chains nationwide [6].

Appearing in 1967 before the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders Hearing, President of the National Food Marketing Commission Clarence Adamy made many of the same points in his outright denial of the allegations of discrimination by chain supermarkets [133]. He asked the Committee, “How in the devil would you run a chain with all kinds of price structures all over the chain? How would you control your people? How would you induce loyalty, how would you induce integrity? How would you induce anything? How would you do this in front of your customers? All of your prices are right there in front of God and everybody. Our full disclosure of our pricing by the nature of our business not anything we do in the nature of integrity, but the nature of our business prohibits this kind of thing.” Regarding the charge that poverty area stores sold lower quality produce, Mr. Adamy gave a counter-explanation: “I would agree with you on a real problem we run into in this area is in the lower income stores there would tend to be a lower turnover rate, the rate of movement from the store to consumers' hands would be slower. It is entirely possible, and in fact quite probable in some stores, that it remains in the stores and is not kept as good. The willingness of the employee to keep cleaning the bin, to get the bad stuff out and throw it away may not be as high in that low-income store.” In his defense against the charge of shipping low quality produce between stores, Mr. Adamy conceded the possibility that the employees in poverty area stores did not keep the facilities as well maintained, which may have been difficult given the lower turnover rate of fresh and perishable foods in those stores [133].

Response from the Supermarket Industry: “We are human and errors do occur”

Supermarket industry representatives, from store managers to corporate executives, stated that mistakes were likely to have been made in such a complex retail operation, and that these mistakes were the only explanation (beside dishonest or inept surveyors) for any independent investigations that had discovered price discrepancies. Supermarkets offered thousands of products and those in charge of changing the price stickers during sales were low-skill level employees, often teenagers, performing an overwhelming task. Mr. White, of Kroger in St. Louis was proud of his company’s system to reduce errors and his statement is worth quoting at length:

“We have developed, and we forcefully administer, a system of controls intended to eliminate as many errors as it is humanly possible to eliminate... But we are no different than anyone else in this room; we are human, and errors do occur, no matter how diligently we try to avoid them. It might be well to note that pencil manufacturers recognize this human imperfection when they put an eraser on each pencil sold to the public. So it's entirely possible that on any given day, in any given store, a particular item will not carry the price it is supposed to carry... Certainly, we can improve. But we are not ashamed of our performance as human beings who have not yet attained perfection. Vital to the discussion here today, however, is the fact that, while these errors may occur, they are not by design. They are not deliberately carried out as a part of a sophisticated conspiracy intended to cheat our customers” [6].

Chairman Rosenthal commented that “human error” was the consistent response given by chain supermarket industry members in hearings held across the country when asked about the origins of price discrepancies (independent stores not part of a chain, on the

other hand, cited their “right to charge any price they wished”). When he asked a Waldbaum’s executive in New York City what could be done to avoid this kind of human error, the executive responded, “Change human beings” [6].

Clearly dissatisfied with this explanation to account for the anecdotes and survey evidence of exploitation around the country, Chairman Rosenthal probed for an explanation about why the pricing problems arise in poor neighborhoods alone. In St. Louis, he pressed Mr. White: “The only consistent explanation we have had is human error, and one of the things you cite, and I think it is true, and I am sympathetic, you have high school kids, inexperienced kids changing these prices and sometimes they are not as efficient as you would like them to be. But why is it that when human error rears its ugly head it always brings the weight down on the side of the ghetto store? They are the slowest in changing prices. Why is that?” In New York City, he raised the same pointed question to the head of the state’s Food Merchant Association: “How would you address yourself to the question of human error in every case? One hundred percent of the human errors come down against the ghetto residents” [6].

Supermarket industry representatives at the hearings rejected the premise of Chairman Rosenthal’s questions, and reframed the line of inquiry as an attack on the integrity of their industry. Any price discrepancies resulted from simple human error, and any other interpretation meant that supermarkets were operated by disreputable men – a premise whole heartedly rejected by industry representatives in these hearings. Their defense was to focus on individual behavior – either that of the low-level clerk who could make understandable mistakes, or the high level managers and executives who were respectable men and would not condone discrimination. A New York City area A&P

supermarket representative claimed, “The managers that we have managing our stores, in any area of the Bronx unit, Westchester County, Bronx, and Manhattan, are all very honorable gentlemen. They have consciences. They have families and I can see no reason under the sun why they would intentionally charge a wrong price.” The Executive Director of the New York State Food Merchants Association stated his shared point of view to the Congressional Committee forcibly:

“You are not dealing with dishonest people or conscienceless people. You are dealing with men who have their lives and their careers totally involved in a business. Even the people with A. & P., the giant of them all... You just can't scourge us and say we are dishonest, and thieves, and mean, to do nothing but cheat, because we deal with repeat customers on a penny profit, and unless we can satisfy them a lot more times than we dissatisfy them, we can't be in business. And that's what happens to our major national operators” [6].

To the operators and executives of the supermarket industry, allegations of unfair practices and deliberate exploitation were taken as a personal insult, and denied and repudiated as such. They clearly used the strategy described by Stone to ascribe any problems to the realm of fate, and thus out of their control or responsibility. According to the industry executives, price discrepancies were not a “conspiracy,” but a product of simple, unavoidable and understandable human error [6]. Therefore, the industry and its agents were not villains, and any discrepancies were the result of inevitable mistakes, rather than malice or intent.

Shared Perspective of the Problem: Allegations were Dangerous

While denying specific charges of wrong doing by chain supermarkets, industry representatives acknowledged that the perception that such abuses occurred was dangerous and a factor in the violence that had damaged supermarkets and independent grocery stores alike in nationwide civil disorders. Mr. Van Gemert, representing Safeway at the Consumer Problems of the Poor hearing, commented; “Even though untrue, they are of the type that can ignite the fuse of further discontent and destructive disruptions of our central core cities” [6]. The *Food Topics* special report presented each side of the argument, but concluded that true or not the perception of discrimination itself was powerful [4]. The article ran the statement of Phil Sims, director of a trade union organization that dealt with black-white employment and commercial relations, who reported the results of a study conducted in Detroit by concerned housewives, which found evidence that prices in the predominantly black inner city were higher than those advertised in white neighborhoods. Mr. Sims commented that this finding validated the practice of many black domestic workers who chose to do their personal shopping in the white neighborhoods where they were employed, to access the lower prices and higher quality store environments found there. The Food Industry Council reported to *Food Topics*, however, that no such price differences were found in their surveys. The trade magazine then opined, “but it no longer matters” who was right or wrong; “The point that the Detroit riots have made for both of them and for the entire supermarket community - is that the Inner City core resident, both Negro *and white* - believes that he is being exploited. The fact that it costs more to do business in Inner City completely escapes him” (emphasis in the original) [4].

In a speech to the annual meeting of the National Association of Food Chains in 1967, Federal Trade Commissioner Mary Gardiner Jones spoke on the topic “The Revolution of Rising Expectations: The Ghetto’s Challenge to American Business,” where she explained to the audience of grocery industry representatives that, “The retailer stands out in the minds of ghetto residents both as the source of all that is supposed to spell success and achievement and well-being and at the same time as a constant reminder to the Negro poor of their own gullibility, inequality, inferiority and powerlessness to share in the affluence with which they are so plentifully surrounded” [5]. During this speech, she did acknowledge that ghetto merchants were the source of “unbelievable and heartbreaking fraud” on too many occasions, but still concluded that merchants were targeted for what they represented in the ghetto, not what they did there. Perhaps because she was speaking to the industry, the Commissioner felt the need to contain blame to a minority of bad actors among retailers and spread the blame to the behavior of the urban poor, who saw a standard of living on TV that they could not attain. Perception, therefore, was as dangerous as reality. But this version of “blame the victim” was not isolated to this speech or to Ms. Gardiner Jones [5].

During the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders Hearings, supermarket trade representative Clarence Adamy addressed this very issue. He began his testimony with two questions that he sought to answer for the Commission: “First, have the actions of food chains played a role in the tensions of the inner city? And second, are there ways in which food chains can contribute -- alone or with the help of government at its various levels -- to a lessening of these tensions?” [133]. He was unwavering in his denial that the actual behavior of food chains had contributed to any tensions in the inner

city, but commented; “we are faced with an apparent inability to lay to rest allegations of economic discrimination against our customers in poverty areas. However, the charges of economic discrimination do crop up from time to time and they reflect, in my opinion, a sincere belief that they are true. To the extent that this reinforces a sense of constant victimization in the minds of the urban poor, there is no question that it contributes to tension and disorder.” Mr. Adamy answered his second question in the affirmative – there was much that the grocery industry, alone or in partnership with the government, could contribute to improving the lives of the urban poor, which would reduce their frustrations and sense of “victimization” that lead to violence in American cities [133].

Problem Construction – Supermarkets and Equality in the Inner City

In these hearings and in other forums where the problems of urban supermarkets were deliberated, the chain supermarket was thus variously constructed by different points of view as both emblematic of the injustices facing poor consumers in the inner city and an important party to the redevelopment and health of poor urban neighborhoods. The position generally shared by affected inner city residents, consumer and civil rights advocates, and to some degree by the leaders of the major investigatory governmental bodies of the era, the social problem at issue was that poor, primarily black residents of America’s inner cities were subject to discrimination and exploitation in their local marketplace for food. The urban poor were constructed as victims, and abusive merchants as the clear villains. However, there was variation in the extent to which this problem was framed as an endemic and systematic feature of the American racial ghetto, or if it was an isolated problem of bad actors taking advantage of poor people. The points of view along

the continuum variously expanded or contracted the scope of the problem, the actors and interests that were culpable, and how radical a policy response was necessary to “fix” the problem and hold accountable those responsible.

Civil right advocates largely indicted oppressive structures and the institutions and interests that maintained them as the real problem behind exploitation in the inner city marketplace. The bad actors, the merchants who raised their prices unfairly, provided low quality goods, or ran high-interest and opaque credit schemes, were taking advantage of the vulnerability to abuse *created* by the racist policies and practices that made the ghetto. Certainly, unethical merchants were villains, but not the root cause of injustice. The ghetto was profitable for a certain class of professional interests, from merchants to the creditors and debt collectors, housing speculators, realtors, and its associated industries – whose members were both white and black. Reverend Jesse Jackson testified on this issue before the 1969 Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs as a representative of Operation Breadbasket. Operation Breadbasket was an economic justice project of the Southern Christian Leadership Council, which organized selective patronage campaigns against businesses that would not hire black Americans in meaningful ways – including supermarkets and grocery stores in predominantly black areas [95]. In his testimony, Rev. Jackson condemned the existence of poverty and hunger in a land of plenty, which he said, could not be solved until America, “tells the truth to herself.” That truth, according to Rev. Jackson, was that it was American public policy to “subsidize, aid, and upgrade” the rich at the expense of the poor [95]. He directly connects the investment in the rich with the disinvestment of the poor – and deconstructs the rhetoric used in public discourse to accomplish those aims. The poor

were given “welfare” and chastised for their poverty, while well-regarded groups were given “subsidies” to promote their success [95]. As examples, Rev. Jackson mentioned the subsidies given to farmers to *not* grow food and tax credits to promote businesses. Rev. Jackson called for a “human subsidy” to replace welfare, and fundamentally invest in the equality and opportunities of the poor and the hungry [95].

One policy to achieve this redistribution of wealth and opportunity was to “declare the slums illegal.” He explained, “The slums, or the geographic locations of the hungry and the poor, need to be declared disaster areas” and dealt with as the nation would deal with an emergency if it were a natural one [95]. Of course, Rev. Jackson explains, the slums were not the product of an act of nature: “the hungry and the poor of the nation suffer daily disaster because of acts of men who conspire to put profits over persons and who create injustice out of their own greed.” He traces the divestments of wealth from black Americans, since the days of slavery through “emancipation into a capitalist system without capital,” and the modern pauperization of the poor through welfare [95]. Rather, the “human subsidy” would replace the concept of welfare and make the redistribution of wealth to the poor as legitimate in public policy discourse as aid to farmers, to businessmen, or to the middle class – the recipients of aid constructed in American society as deserving [95].

The progressive labor unionist took a similar position in his analysis of the Detroit Riots, by locating the heart of the problem that led to the civil demonstrations in the fundamentally unjust institutions that created the ghetto [135]. The Detroit “riots,” he explained, needed to be understood as an *insurrection* against that unjust order, not merely an expression of anger and frustration by the urban underclass. He reflected that

among the establishment, there was little desire to acknowledge that the riots were a political demonstration, and that they called for a policy solution that must upend the current system: “None were willing or wanted to be the first to call what was happening in the ghettos of Detroit an uprising or an insurrection. To have done so would have been to acknowledge that a surprisingly large section of the Black working and unemployed class supported by Black Power advocates were rebelling against an intolerable system which was innately not capable of stopping the oppression of the Afro-American people” [135]. That the riots were politically motivated was clear in the primary targets of civil disorder – merchants and the police. Though the incident that provoked the Detroit Riot in 1967 was relatively minor, he explained that the response was both spontaneous and “much more consciously insurrectional and against the most blatant oppressors of the Black people, the merchants who fatten up on Black exploitation and the armed power of the ruling class” [135]. Elsewhere, in the riot report North Philadelphia, civil rights activist Bayard Rustin is quoted as saying, "A society that refuses to give some of its people equal rights and opportunities creates frustrations whose brunt is thrown at the police because they are the obvious protectors of an unjust order" [131].

In this problem construction – that the slums are inherently exploitative and create the opportunity for interests to profit and take advantage of the geographically bound vulnerability of the inner city – the appropriate policy response is a radical transformation of social and economic structures. Villainizing individual merchants would actually take the focus away from the institutional structures and interests that allowed them to profit and succeed. Rather, promoting policies to dismantle the slums and fundamentally redistribute wealth would have to recognize that public policy has systematically divested

black Americans of wealth and barred equal opportunity to generate new wealth, and thus reverse those policies. Laws removing discrimination were necessary but not sufficient to accomplish this reinvestment.

Civil rights advocates in this discourse are clear that only justice and redistribution would create civil order. The author of the North Philadelphia riot report concluded: "The long term answer lies undoubtedly in sweeping social changes which will alter general relationships between Negroes and whites" [131]. The author quoted Mr. Rustin again, who explained that: "When the civil-rights movement struggles to change the slums people live in, when it struggles to get a better school system for all, when we are trying to get jobs, we are in fact being the policeman's best friend. To the degree that the civil-rights fight gets rid of frustrations caused by injustice, to that degree the police are protected from the inevitable avenues of violent release of those who feel the horrors of oppression" [131]. Rev. Jackson testified to a similar end at the 1969 Select Committee on Hunger and Nutrition, explaining: "Law and order are possible in America. But it is important to understand that order is not the absence of noise for that is quietness. Order is the presence of Justice. And inherent in order is Peace, for there cannot be peace unless the goods of the society are distributed properly" [95]. These interest groups expanded the scope of the problem in their construction, placing blame more widely on systemic forces and calling for systemic change as the only valid solution.

Within the policy discourse on urban supermarkets, the poor could be constructed as victims in need of government protection without necessarily calling for redistributive policies. A more restricted view of the problem, that still appealed to notions of justice, was that poor households paid more for goods and received less, and that this was

fundamentally unfair and un-American (as well as being inflammatory). In his opening statement at the Consumer Problems of the Poor hearing, Chairman Rosenthal explained, “It is my personal conviction that equal justice in the marketplace is hardly less important to the poor than equal justice before the law. Price discrimination is intolerable under any circumstances, but particularly so because food expenditures account for about a third of the income of the urban poor” [6]. Injustice in the marketplace for the poor was therefore incongruent with professed American ideals. Dr. Caplovitz connected the problems of discrimination in the inner city marketplace with President Johnson’s Great Society and War on Poverty, explaining that the problems “demand the attention of our Government if the war on poverty is to be won and if our ideals of Justice are to be maintained” [6]. In its final recommendations, the Kerner Report concluded that “Only a greatly enlarged commitment to national action - compassionate, massive and sustained, backed by the will and resources of the most powerful and the richest nation on this earth - can shape a future that is compatible with the historic ideals of American society” [134].

Civil rights advocates like Rev. Jackson and Mr. Bayard might dissent about whether the historic ideals that shaped American institutions was actually emancipatory and just for all people, but this rhetoric sought to advance equal protection for the urban poor and acknowledged that the ghetto was a place (if not a *cause*) of exploitation. If American ideals were to be met, and the legitimate frustrations of the poor to be relieved, the government was responsible for protecting the vulnerable against discrimination and actively promoting equal protection under the law. In this view, individual merchants who exploited the poor were clear villains and their behavior was blamed for fueling civil disorders. Mr. Johnson of the OEO testified at the National Advisory Commission on

Civil Disorders Hearing that, “We cannot be too surprised that lawlessness breeds lawlessness. The subtle, sophisticated lawlessness of slum merchants breeds the violent lawlessness of their victims. We must assist in removing this explosive powder that has been accumulating in the ghettos for decades” [133]. In New York City, Deputy Mayor Dr. Costello testified in the Consumer Problems of the Poor Hearing for the need to treat unfair merchant behavior as a crime, saying; “The examples which will be cited today of higher food prices in ghetto areas represent a situation which cries out for correction. The fact that they may be isolated cases does not absolve anyone. Crime involves essentially occasional acts, but it still must be suppressed whenever it occurs. And deliberate overcharge of those least able to pay is economic crime, a variety of petty larceny which becomes grand when you multiply the number of helpless victims” [6].

To protect poor consumers, local government representatives and consumer advocates at the national hearings proposed programs and policies that would enact legal protection and offer avenues to support self-help ventures. Consumer education was also widely cited in the hearings as an appropriate action moving forward, but some political actors explicitly dissented from education as the policy solution that could address the fundamental problems in the urban marketplace for food. Manhattan Borough president Percy Sutton, testifying at the Consumer Problems of the Poor Hearings in New York City claimed that, “What is most needed is a massive program of consumer education. Exploitation will end only after the would-be exploited become sophisticated consumers and are able to recognize when they are being exploited, and then know what they can do about it” [6]. Theodore Berry, Director of the national Community Action Program of the OEO and civil rights lawyer, also suggested ways to help the poor manage their finances

and so reduce the need for credit: “For the same reasons a business must efficiently manage its budget and debt, so must a family, especially a poor family. This program provides the counseling that makes budgeting and debt management possible for the poor” [6]. *Food Topics* reported on the education programs of Newark’s local OEO program, stating that the purpose of such efforts was to “wean ghetto Negroes away from their traditional shopping habits.” The program taught inner city housewives how to make shopping and cooking plans that would last for the week ahead, and concluded that if the urban poor would “follow this pattern of suburban housewives in making major purchases, they will become accustomed to shopping when they have cash to spend and will buy enough to last until the next payday” [4].

This line of policy solutions, while perhaps aiming to reduce the need for credit that was often only available on unfair terms, implied that the shopping habits of poor inner city residents contributed to the problem of discrimination in their marketplace. This construction is what Stone describes as a liberal version of “blaming the victim” – the impetus to remove victimization was on the affected group to change their own behaviors. Dr. Caplovitz, while not opposing consumer education in general, was explicit that alone it was not sufficient to end discrimination in the marketplace. He testified before the Consumer Problems of the Poor Hearing that education should more accurately be understood as a positive result of consumer action policies and programs, not their goal: “It is not a matter of people being educated; it is a matter of deceptive practices that need to be corrected. So, I feel that, sure, there is a need for consumer education, but the best kind of education takes place through consumer action. People who belong to credit unions quickly learn a great deal about budgeting and interest.

People who belong to food cooperatives learn a great deal about the quality of food” [6].

Consumer protection, in this view, required a broader view of the problem than relying on consumer education to help the poor better navigate their marketplace. On the one hand there was a need for legislation and government intervention to strengthen existing and create new consumer protection laws. Dr. Caplovitz spoke about the need for new credit legislation at both national hearings. The City of New York established a Council on Consumer Affairs in 1967, the statutory language of which was included in the Consumer Problems of the Poor Hearings, presumably as a model for other municipalities to adopt, to coordinate the city’s efforts on both consumer education and protection [6]. The Deputy Director of the Community Action Program with the OEO, William Bozman, echoed the sentiments of Dr. Caplovitz, testifying before the Consumer Problems of the Poor Committee that: “Traditional programs of consumer education are not the answer. Changes must come in the economic and legal structure of the marketplace” [6]. The legislation called for by the OEO was “working for changes in the laws which govern the relationships between seller and buyer, borrower and lender, so that those being exploited will be provided the protection which will stop the exploitation,” and dealing with the issues of wage garnishment, confession of judgment, and “other archaic legal doctrines which for the poor person symbolize the ‘system’ which in their eyes keeps the rich, rich and the poor, poor” [6].

Beyond either consumer education or advancing consumer protection laws, there was wide sentiment by OEO representatives both national and local, consumer advocates, and among affected inner city residents that lasting and significant change might occur if the government would support ventures of self-help and community ownership of

businesses in the inner city marketplace. One such way was for the community to cooperatively own its supermarket. Manhattan Borough President Percy Sutton discussed the success of such a venture by low-income housewives in Harlem, and suggested how the federal and local governments could support these markets through policy [6]. Support could come in the form of long-term loans at low interest rates for start-up capital, which could be made possible via the Small Business Administration if new proposed legislation was passed and technical assistance to help groups successfully establish new stores. He suggested that the federal government could broker a technical assistance program wherein the food chains advised low-income residents in setting up new co-operative supermarkets [6].

At the Consumer Problems of the Poor Hearing in New York City, a Harlem resident stood up during an exchange with supermarket industry representatives and Chairman Rosenthal about how the government could encourage more supermarkets to open in inner city areas. Mrs. Florence Rice shared her experience in organizing the consumer co-operative in Harlem, which was “owned and run and controlled by the people” [6]. When asked by Chairman Rosenthal what the government could do to assist cooperative ventures like theirs, she echoed the call for “seed money” to help establish inventory and the storefront, and explained that their venture was created through the small donations of many people. Nonetheless, she explained that she was not “one of the ones advocating for outsider supermarkets anymore to come into low-income areas.” Rather than have the government design policies to attract chains to the inner city, Mrs. Rice voiced her preference for more cooperatives like hers that provided a social benefit in addition to quality food at low prices. A co-operative business model was frequently

posited as a solution for the problem of accessing quality food at fair and affordable prices, and while also being explicitly about regaining community control over the marketplace for food [6].

Consumer advocates like Caplovitz also suggested credit unions and other institutions of self-help, wherein the solutions to an unfair and exploitative existing market was for poor people to create their own alternative marketplaces. The central concept was the need for community control and community buy-in in the economic institutions in the inner city, since most retail operations in the inner city were owned by people who lived elsewhere. A Catholic priest from St. Louis, Reverend Louis Schocklee testified at the Consumer Problems of the Poor Hearing that one problem in his inner city parish was that “everything we have in our community is owned by somebody on the outside.” Across interest groups, it was suggested that a lack of community ownership contributed to the negative perceptions inner city consumers had about their local merchants, whether justified or not [6].

Food Topics interviewed food chain executives and civil rights advocates about the possibility of consumer cooperatives as a solution to the problems of access to quality food at fair prices in the inner city, and their responses were unsurprisingly contradictory to the views of consumer groups and inner city residents [4]. The *Food Topics* investigation reported that while consumer food cooperative appeared to be a popular idea among consumer advocates and poverty area councils, it was “generally pooh-poohed in supermarket circles.” Supermarket operators commented that they were already operating on a one-percent margin, and wondered how these groups with no experience in the grocery industry would manage to be more efficient than them. The

article continued to explain that providing a better or more efficient food store was really just the superficial aim of such ventures, writing: “The true vista of discussing co-operatives, however, seemed to have a subtle rather than an overt purpose... There seems to be less concern over the markup than the ownership. Inner City leadership, which in Detroit is Negro as in many other cities, is concerned that its community is not being given equal access to the benefits of economic democracy” [4]. In not so direct language, the article suggests that the tacit reason behind the popularity of the co-operative food model was that it wrested control from white corporate owners to the control of black inner city residents.

Black ownership of supermarkets in the inner city was rare – George Kelsey, director of Newark’s Interracial Council for Business Opportunity and Development, a Ford Foundation funded organization that assisted the development of black-owned businesses explained to *Food Topics* that “the dearth of black-owned stores fosters bitterness and frustration among ghetto residents” [4]. Black ownership of stores was therefore one solution proposed by civil rights and consumer groups, as a way of addressing the more fundamental problem of a lack of community control over the marketplace of the inner city and the problem of equal economic opportunities for black entrepreneurs. Discrimination in the market for fair commercial credit was a serious hindrance to the establishment of black businesses, whether grocery stores or otherwise. The North Philadelphia riot report made the recommendation that: “The Negro merchant must become as familiar a sight in the Negro community as the Negro consumer. Low-cost Government loans and other aid provided by civic groups might help Negroes establish stores of their own. Poverty-fund grants might be made available to train Negro

youth for responsible, rather than menial, positions in existing stores” [131]. Yet, evidence illustrating which stores were damaged during the riots suggests that black ownership in and of itself was no guarantee against unethical merchant practices [135].

The solution of more black owned businesses or the development of co-operative businesses were policy responses that were aimed at responding to the problem of inadequate and discriminatory market for food in inner city neighborhoods. The chain supermarket lobby had a different perspective on the problem – the marketplace for food in the inner city was indeed inadequate, but the problem was that too few chain supermarkets were there. Most supermarkets in inner city neighborhoods were small independent stores, which charged more because of their pricing structure and scale. And so the efficiency of a modern chain supermarket was proposed as the reasonable way to alleviate the problem of the inadequate and high priced market for food in poor neighborhoods.

The following section delves deeper into the discourses of the supermarket industry, the nuances between the perspectives of operator compared to corporate executives and lobbyists, and the various detractors to their problem constructions, rhetoric, and policy solutions.

Supermarket Scarcity in the 1960s and the Role of Government

In the discourse over the public policy problem of access to quality groceries at fair prices among the urban poor, commentators from community residents to public interest groups to the supermarket industry cited a lack of modern chain supermarkets in the inner city. Rather, most grocery stores in poor and predominantly black urban

communities were independently owned, both large and small. These operations offered services and benefits that the chains often did not – including longer hours and days of operation and credit services where customers could charge their grocery bill to an on-going account. Yet, independent grocers were also sources of dissatisfaction in the inner city. Whether they were charging unfair interest rates or over-charging on bills was often difficult to determine, since the books were typically not available for the customers to review. Residents frequently charged the local grocer with padding their accounts and taking advantage of the credit customer, who was most vulnerable and least able to afford the high prices on food. George Kelsey of Newark's Interracial Council for Business Opportunity and Development reported to *Food Topics* that: "I've had small store owners tell me that the reason they were staying in the ghetto was because they could make more money there by getting higher markups" [4].

Corporate grocery industry representatives and individual store operators defended the higher prices found in independent supermarkets as a product of the scale of those operations and the increased costs of doing business in the inner city [4, 6, 133]. Such higher prices, while perhaps a social problem to the poor consumer, were not evidence of discrimination but rather a product of the operating environment. Merchants reported to *Food Topics* that they needed a higher profit margin than large-scale supermarkets to stay in business, and justified the charge of interest on their credit accounts due to the extra burden and cost of record keeping [4]. Mr. Adamy, in his testimony as the representative of the National Food Merchants Association explained that independent stores were usually smaller and therefore could not purchase with the scale and efficiency of the larger chains, and commented forcibly; "There is nothing

insidious about this. These people aren't cheating" [133]. During a similar exchange at the Consumer Problems of the Poor Hearing held in New York City, an A&P corporate executive supplied these same arguments about the higher costs of operating independents. Chairman Rosenthal regarded this testimony as "irrelevant" since they could all accept that economies of scale affected the price structure of various stores, but that did not answer the social question of whether deception was not also occurring within these operations or within chains [6].

A division manager of a St. Louis chain supermarket, however, voiced the general position of the industry when he rejected the premise that chains or large independents were discriminating and redirected the conversation towards what he thought was the question at hand, explaining: "I think that hearings and studies of this kind are very beneficial, but it seems to me that the real question that needs to be answered is, do the poor pay more for food, and if so, why do they pay more, and it doesn't help to solve this real problem by creating imaginary problems about discriminatory pricing... I believe that the consumer who lives close to a supermarket that is owned and operated by a large chain or a large company, independent, buys her food at as low a price as anyone who might live in a suburban area" [6]. The next logical question for debate was why weren't there more chain or large independent grocers in inner city neighborhoods? And in a related matter, what could be done in partnership with government to attract them there?

Several observers commented that the need was specifically for *modern* supermarkets, since the chain stores found in inner city neighborhoods were frequently outdated²⁶, smaller, and in deteriorated physical condition. As an article in *Food Topics*

²⁶ Consider that the first use of the barcode (or Universal Product Code) used in the grocery industry did not appear until 1974 (Carroll Purcell, *White Heat: People and Technology*: University of California Press,

explained, while nearly all customers of inner city supermarkets were low-income black local residents, not all residents of the inner city shopped at the supermarkets found in their neighborhoods [4]. When transportation was available, whether personal or public, upper income and middle class black inner city residents would shop at the supermarkets in white neighborhoods either in suburbia or in the fringe urban areas. The chain markets that located in inner city neighborhoods were frequently the “discount” line of a large chain, which had lower quality merchandise and physical surroundings. In 1963, Detroit only had one premier supermarket in the inner city – an A&P. Both Kroger and Wrigley, regional chains, operated in the inner city of Detroit only as their Bi-Lo and Packer discount lines, which sold inferior brands [4]. In New York City, Manhattan Borough President Percy Sutton testified to the Consumer Problems of the Poor Committee that: “All too frequently, the large supermarket chains are reluctant to serve ghetto neighborhoods. When they do offer service to low-income communities, it is often with small and obsolete units selling inferior-quality food at inflated prices” [6]. Several sources noted that some modern supermarkets were found in urban redevelopment areas, but that, importantly, those stores no longer served the low-income people who had been displaced during “urban renewal” programs [6, 133].

A consumer advocate in New York City pointed out the age of the chain supermarkets found in these neighborhoods, saying, “Many of the stores in the ghetto areas, particularly the A&P chain, but in other chains also, have been there an awful long time. They are run down... The stores aren't painted. They are not renovated” [6]. The condition of the stores, therefore, was turning away higher income residents of central

1994). The discourse on outdated stores is happening, therefore, even before the massive technological advances that came to new stores built in the following decade.

cities who could access better quality stores in other neighborhoods more easily than poor inner city residents. The consumer advocate, Mr. Press, argued before the Consumer Problems of the Poor Committee that this lack of investment in inner city stores was due to the problematic perspective of large chains, which failed “to realize that the poor person can be just as good a customer as the middle-income person if he is treated the right way.” According to the supermarket industry, high urban taxes posed a significant barrier to renovating existing stores, since improvements in the property value would result in a higher tax burden [6].

Barriers to Investing in the Inner City: Cost, Crime, and Culture

The industry defense to these various related accusations was that the inner city was less profitable and more difficult to operate in, and these contexts discouraged new investment in America’s inner cities. The real question before the chain supermarkets as an industry was whether it was “worth it” to invest in the inner city at all, and what might induce them to do so following the civil disorders that destroyed many supermarkets and increased the burdens of operating their existing stores. In her 1967 speech before national representatives of the food retail industry, Mary Gardiner Jones makes this central tension explicit: “I would suppose the real question confronting the chains or any retailer today in contemplating expansion into the inner city is whether antagonism and mistrust of the community, so frequently reflected in pilferage, vandalism, and in extreme cases, the riots make expansion plans at this time wholly unrealistic and doomed to ultimate failure” [5].

The industry identified the various costs and barriers of operating in the inner city that did not exist to the same extent in the suburbs: insurance rates were higher, attracting highly skilled employees was difficult, there was not adequate loading areas for wholesaler deliveries, and worse some deliverymen refused to service the inner city locations after-hours for fears of personal safety. Store operators reported costly losses due to pilferage, damaged goods within the store by careless shoppers, and higher costs of hiring security personnel. Finding an appropriate site was cited as a major barrier in building new supermarkets in the inner city, as modern supermarkets required more than a 60,000 square-foot footprint to accommodate a parking lot [133]. There were few parcels of available land in the city, and it was difficult to acquire individual parcels from separate owners to create a large enough footprint for these stores. By contrast, large parcels of land at reasonable rates were readily available in growing suburban areas where taxes were also lower. Mr. Adamy cited these varied explanations about the higher costs of operations to the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, but made sure to clarify that such difference in cost would not generate or justify any price differences within the same chain store, whether in the city or in the suburbs. Rather, it affected a chain's interest in developing new stores in the inner city [133].

Many of the store operators appealed to their responsibility to the bottom line and to their shareholders – they would go where it was most profitable to operate. Deputy Mayor of New York City, Dr. Costello acknowledged this profit-making imperative, and reported that in his role as chair of the city's new Council on Consumer Affairs, industry representatives had confirmed a “reluctance to make substantial investments in poverty neighborhoods,” and many in fact were closing their existing operations [6]. He testified:

“The industry feels responsible to its stockholders to invest in the most profitable markets, and more money can be made in Harrison or Hartsdale than in Harlem. My point is that business has a responsibility to the community, to all the people, not just to the affluent” [6].

However, there is evidence that operating costs and profitability alone was not the entire story for why few chain supermarkets operated modern stores in the inner city and were ambivalent about building more. On the one hand there was a robust discussion among industry executives that there was great opportunity in the inner city, if the industry could figure out how to operate successfully. Industry representative Clarence Adamy conceded to the Advisory Commission that if they were guilty of one shortcoming it would be a lack of imagination in creating new successful formats in the inner city, rather than predicting failure in any adaptation of a suburban store to the realities of the inner city [133]. The FTC Commissioner, Mary Gardiner Jones, echoed a similar idea in her speech to the industry, stating that American entrepreneurship has always been innovative to meet the needs of the consumer. As such, she suggested that perhaps radical new formats were in order to serve the inner city, such as a supermarket at the base of a skyscraper or a parking lot on the roof [95].

But testimony from managers and workers in inner city supermarkets suggested that they had concerns that could not be explicitly made in the public discourse. A union representative responsible for grocery store employees interjected from the back of the room during the Consumer Problems of the Poor Hearing in New York City that the Committee was not getting the full story from the industry representatives [6]. Executives from numerous chains in New York City and elsewhere testified that they didn’t have any

particular problems with their inner city operations. Chairman Rosenthal asked the labor leader, Mr. Stern, to explain why all of those who appeared in front of his Committee on behalf of the supermarkets denied that “there were any special problems in the ghetto areas.” Mr. Stern replied, without elaborating, “I doubt whether you're getting the complete story. I think there is a great concern about discussing some of the sensitive areas, and I think that candor is called for, and I think you can't solve a...” [6]. Before he could finish his statement, Chairman Rosenthal interrupted, “If the giants of the food industry won't be candid with us, how will we get to first base?” Another union representative, later in the Hearing confirmed Mr. Stern's claims, saying “There is much more to check, as my friend Stern says, president of our council in New York, than just the price structure alone. The reason why do people run away from here and don't open any stores. The Food Family stores, our stores, had three markets. One burned. Then they remained with two. One is there willing to give up and close” [6].

As a group, individual storeowners may have been more candid with reporters from the grocery trade publication *Food Topics*, as compared with industry representatives who were on the defense for poor conduct in inner city areas before a Congressional Hearing. Yet several were still circumspect and spoke around the point they wanted to make, rather than express it explicitly when asked about their opinions on operating in the inner city following the riots. In a series of interviews with storeowners in Watts two years following the 1965 riots in the area, few reported problems or negative incidents with community residents. One storeowner shared that it was difficult to operate in the area. When pressed by *Food Topics* why it was difficult, he snapped back “There are reasons – but I have no statement to make.” *Food Topics* wrote, “Others

share his attitude.” And according to “a source close to the scene” supermarkets in Watts had problems with picket lines, general acts of harassment and beatings, and that the vast majority of storeowners kept firearms somewhere in the market [4]. Storeowners on the frontlines clearly felt embattled, while industry representatives in government Hearings diminished the scale of problems with their operations in low-income areas.

Many storeowners wanted to sell, but were unable to find buyers. A wholesaler interviewed by *Food Topics* claimed that 60% of grocery store owners in Watts, where “47 out of 114 stores were affected by ‘riot rampage’” were interested in selling and moving their operations [4]. Yet buyers were scarce since the area had, “a reputation.” One independent grocer was quoted as saying, “You can’t operate in this area. Sell? Hell, man, I’ll give the place to you.” Store operators clearly identified themselves as victims of the civil disorders. Many reported being unable to hire qualified white workers to work in their stores, “regardless of how attractive the job is made.” Others reported being penalized by their insurance companies, even if their stores had received no damage at all during the riots, with policies being canceled or significant increases in their premiums. One wholesaler exclaimed, “Damned near every store in the area – 95% of them – were dropped by their insurance companies. It was a policy cancelation riot.” *Food Topics* editorialized, “The truth may have been stretched a little. But not much.” Delays in payments or insufficient payouts by insurance companies also made it difficult for some stores to rebuild [4].

What seems to go unsaid in these interviews with individual owners is that there was a fear of future riots or interpersonal crime in inner city locations; perhaps they were worried that saying this too explicitly would identify them as targets for future

demonstrations. In the words of one independent operator in Watts, “If you mind your own business, you’re all right” [4]. There seems to have been a discomfort in describing the tensions and mutual mistrust that existed between white storeowners and the predominantly black communities that they operated in. *Food Topics* interviews in Detroit on the problems of theft and pilferage in inner city stores demonstrated this issue – while some industry observers claimed there were no more severe theft problems with their inner city operations, others were “unwilling to drop the subject so lightly. Pilferage and damage are not only two of the most studied subjects in Detroit supermarket circles, but are also among the most explosive in terms of ghetto customer-store relationships. Negroes in responsible positions who were interviewed by *Food Topics* found this topic an offensive one” [4]. Advocates for inner city consumers pointed out that suburban stores also experienced significant pilferage and damage, and so this was a pernicious stereotype about inner city residents [4].

Perhaps trying to distance themselves from this sensitive racial discourse, some store owners and industry representatives sought to remove considerations of race from the dialogue about the issues of supermarket operations. *Food Topics* reported the allegations made against inner city grocers, and concluded, “It is difficult to discuss this question of Inner City food retailing without becoming involved in basic Negro-white relationships” [4]. Such a concern, however, was seen as distracting from the real issue at hand, which was that it was more costly to operate in high poverty areas. An unnamed industry observed is quoted as explaining, “It just happens that the Negro is at the bottom of the economic ladder,” and that since operating costs are higher in high poverty

neighborhoods, supermarkets “have to charge more to anyone - black or white who comes into that store” [4].

The Inner City and Opportunity: Developing the Urban Marketplace for Food

Industry spokesman Clarence Adamy redirected the discourse about inner city chain supermarkets being part of the problem of urban poverty, to supermarkets being a key component in its solution through his testimony in front of the National Advisory Committee on Civil Disorders [133]. He summarized the discourse, explaining, “The location of food chains and supermarkets in ghetto areas is both a problem and an opportunity. Far from being an unwanted villain in the issue of whether the poor pay more, food chains have also been criticized for not being more fully represented in the ghetto areas.” He suggested that the false and pernicious allegations of wrongdoing might lead food chains to “decide that running stores in poverty areas is more trouble than it's worth.” He continued with his argument, that while this would end charges of discrimination it would do nothing to help the plight of the urban poor, who did indeed deserve access to high quality food at fair prices. Since supermarkets were the most efficient vehicle for providing that social good, there was a clear need for the government to assist the food chain industry in both remaining in high poverty areas and in overcoming the obstacles in developing new stores [133].

Various participants in the public policy discourse about supermarket operations in the city, particularly by industry and government agency representatives, described the modern supermarket as a vital resource for the inner city community. Adamy stated before the Advisory Committee that: “Food chains can make a major contribution to the

inhabitants of poverty areas simply by being there” [133]. A representative from the A. & P. testified to the Consumer Problems of the Poor Hearing that his company had “made a real contribution to the health of this nation by its policy of selling at prices so low that they yield only about a one percent return on sales. As a result of that pricing policy, and of A. & P.’s insistence on selling the best quality food available, millions of people in the poorer areas in this country are able to get better food at lower prices than they would otherwise be able to obtain” [6]. Rev. Schocklee, representing an inner city community in St. Louis testified that despite the problems residents have reported about the operations of chain stores in the area, he wasn’t sure the situation would be made any better if the chains were to close the few local operations they had. He expressed fear that if community groups voicing allegations of abuse raised “too much Cain about Kroger they might cancel their lease and move and we have added to our problems” [6].

Similarly in New York City, Dr. Costello warned against “burning down the barn to catch the vagrants” – that despite the actions of some bad actors, “In general supermarkets and other food stores are helpful institutions in the ghetto.” He continued by explaining what might be the alternative if these stores left the community: “They are far better than the rows of vacant stores that haunt some decaying urban areas. Stores provide liveliness, economic vitality and social interchange. They bring people the necessities of life, as well as luxuries they can and cannot afford. Business and commerce have helped make New York City great, and they are not enemies of the people. If stores are well behaved, they can be good neighbors” [6]. FTC Commissioner Mary Gardiner Jones made an explicit connection between the interests of the food industry and the nation’s social interest in providing the poor fair access to high quality food. To her, the

mutual benefit was inherent to the business enterprise, she explained: “Business has long ago recognized that its interests and those of the community in which it locates are in the long run identical” [5].

Supermarket development was seen as a policy intervention that could assist in preventing decay in the inner city and in catalyzing economic development, both in terms of jobs and the health of the marketplace more generally. Mary Jones Gardiner explained to her audience of food industry representatives that; “The encouragement of the larger food chains to go into these areas is an important part of the government’s efforts to lower the cost of food to ghetto residents. It also forms a part of the government’s long-range program of area economic development for the inner city” [5]. Among the benefits of attracting chain supermarkets to low-income neighborhoods was the expansion of jobs in areas of high unemployment, particularly among youth. A consumer advocate in St. Louis testified before the Consumer Problems of the Poor Committee that, “The very presence of the supermarket in the inner city has and should increasingly mean more job opportunities for ghetto residents” [6]. If policy and practice encouraged these markets to hire from the community for meaningful employment, it could even improve the perceptions of the store and reduce tension or mistrust that had been a factor in civil disorders. The consumer advocate explained, “The more employees particularly on the managerial level which the food organization hires from the local community, the more potential they will have for being regarded by the community as an integral part of the area rather than as a profitmaking outside interest” [6].

Furthermore, a number of industry spokesmen and operators claimed that there were significant business opportunities in the inner city, despite the realities of higher

operating costs and the various challenges of running inner city stores. Mary Jones Gardiner claimed, “The inner city represents a vast untapped market for the goods and services of American business. It is the potential growth area - perhaps one of the few remaining – for many American retail businesses” [5]. According to interviews conducted with chain supermarket executives in Watts, it was worth it to remain in the inner city. The article reported that, “It’s no secret that people in the Negro community ‘...spend like crazy.’ If you know how to merchandise and cater to them, you will do well here. Estimated grocery spending in the Watts perimeter tops 39 million. That’s the incentive that’s keeping the doors of better food stores open” [4]. In Detroit, they reported that “A nearly \$200 million retail food market is up for grabs right now” in the inner city, and that “Someone is going to have to feed these people. If it isn't the private enterprise supermarket community, who will it be?” *Food Topics* noted that the same situation was perceived vastly differently by the industry and the community: “While businessmen might see such figures reflecting a market opportunity, Negro leaders and community organizations in Newark see them primarily reflecting the ghetto’s need” [4].

What was the role of the government in brokering the needs of the poor with the business interests of the supermarket industry? In his testimony Mr. Adamy asked for government help to alleviate some of the specific challenges of inner city operations: help with land acquisition, perhaps through eminent domain, a shared-cost program of employee training, assistance with high insurance costs [133]. Adamy also suggested that local governments “reexamine” high property taxes that he suggested discourage significant supermarket renovation investments. Rather than participate in the public castigation of the bad actions of a very few merchants, Mr. Adamy argued that,

“government at all levels must accept some responsibility for thoughtful attention to our day-to-day operating problems” [133]. In the other forums the responsibility of the government was described as a sort of matchmaker role between the interests of society and that of business. Chairman Rosenthal described the role of an urban coalition chaired by New York City Mayor Lindsay, which was “attempting to coax private enterprise and business into helping improve society” [6]. Government was in the position to bring these interests together, for the mutual benefit of business and the inner city consumer.

Supermarkets in the 1960s: Summary and Conclusions

The public policy debate about the adequacy of the inner city marketplace for food in the 1960s was indivisible from wider social questions of economic discrimination, the role of the private market in social welfare, and the responsibilities of government. It occurred in a time period when the problems of poverty were high on the policy agenda – President Lyndon Johnson had declared a War on Poverty as part of his Great Society agenda and prioritized federal investigations into poverty’s causes and social consequences. The major federal hearings on the inner city marketplace echoed these national concerns – that poverty and hunger should exist in a land of plenty was an affront to the national ideal and image. However, urban riots nationwide focused the discourse on how and why black Americans experienced discrimination in the marketplace, and vaulted academic questions about whether the poor paid more to social questions about racialized exploitation and the threat of urban disorder.

At one end of the problem construction spectrum, civil rights and consumer advocates characterized the urban ghetto itself as a root cause of racialized injustice in the

marketplace for food, and promoted redistributive policies as the only effective solution. They expanded the scope of the problem to the diffuse interests of equality and justice, and framed the problem as a question of human rights. In defense, the supermarket industry sought to narrow the scope of the problem. Chain supermarket executives repeatedly cited human error as the only explanation for price differences between neighborhoods, reducing a systemic social problem to the mistakes of a few employees. They were able to change the narrative and in doing so contracted the scope of the problem, reducing it to an accusation against the honor and credibility of individuals. Rather than the villains they were characterized to be in the stories of the poor, who felt a constant sense of “victimization,” supermarket operations themselves were victims of property crimes, unfair insurance contracts, and a difficult operating environment [133].

Yet, the modern large and efficient chain supermarket, though accused of discriminatory behavior in their inner city locations, was also cited for not operating enough stores in those neighborhoods. A supermarket was seen as a social good, as the most efficient way to deliver low cost, high quality food. But a supermarket was a private, not a social, enterprise, responsible to its shareholders, not to society. Thus the supermarket industry and some consumer advocates constructed the government as responsible for facilitating the marriage of the interests of business and of its hungry citizens. In the alternate problem construction, the responsibility of the role of government was primarily understood as protecting consumers, alleviating injustice, and promoting self-help enterprises that would create market alternatives.

Indivisible from the policy debate over the problems of urban supermarkets was how its various solutions would affect civil order in American cities. On the one hand, it

was argued that attracting modern supermarkets to the inner city was an essential component in economic redevelopment, access to affordable and high quality food, and a stabilizing institution that would reduce urban unrest. On the other hand, civil rights and consumer advocates argued that the only viable solution was protection against the exploitation that was endemic to the marketplace of the American urban ghetto. In the following decade, as concerns about civil disorders faded and new crises emerged, the urgency of the human rights frame would cede ground to a general debate about how best to feed the inner city. The problem for consumer and civil rights advocates was no longer primarily about exploitation and the need for protection in the marketplace, but the overall lack of retail options in the inner city and how to address that need. Thus, the nuances in the coming debate would build on the problem construction offered by the supermarket industry, as well as some non-profit and public consumer advocates – that the urban poor needed access to an efficient food delivery system, and the government could broker the relationship between the food industry and the hungry.

4-5 The 1970's: Stemming the Tide of Supermarket Flight and Building Alternatives

Overview

At the end of the 1960s, following several years of urban unrest and nationwide accusations of unethical behavior that implicated supermarkets in the problems of the inner city, the supermarket industry was asking itself whether it was worth it to remain or expand their urban operations. Chain supermarkets in urban areas tended to be outmoded, small, and in neighborhoods with changing demographics. Operating in the inner city

meant navigating challenging social relationships with local residents and with the bureaucracy of local governments. In contrast, the suburbs offered more attractive conditions to operate a high-volume business like the grocery industry, as well as fewer of the problems associated with operating stores in lower-income urban areas. *Food Topics* asked its readership of industry insiders in 1967: "Should super markets actively try to win this market? Is worth the effort? Or will it go another way perhaps to cooperative groups? Will government step in and play a larger role?" [4]. By the middle of the 1970s, the answers seemed clear – without government assistance, the inner city was not considered a viable place for chain supermarkets to do business. But what government assistance should look like was unknown and debated within the publications of the industry, reports by marketing academics, and government-led forums for discussing policy solutions.

The discourse of this era subtly shifted from a focus on the problems of the poor, to the problems of operating businesses in poor neighborhoods. Certainly, there was the acknowledgement that if supermarkets could not successfully operate in the inner city it would affect the health and wellbeing of the urban poor. But whereas the debates of the 1960s followed the questions - "do the poor pay more for food, and if so, why?" the policy debates of the 1970s revolved around the questions – "why are supermarkets leaving the city, and what can be done to attract them back?" Only in the documents from the early 1970s was there an appraisal of the exploitation discourse from the previous decade, and those authors largely rejected the claims of consumer groups from the era. One academic author concluded in 1972 that of the 25 studies conducted in 38 cities, allegations of discriminatory behavior were found to be "either false or grossly

exaggerated” [11].

The ‘real’ problem, according to the industry and its academic observers, was that the environment of the inner city was not viable for the modern supermarket. The behavior of the inner city poor was implicated as part of the problem: pilferage and the threat of physical violence increased operating costs, dissuaded qualified employees from working at inner city locations, and discouraged supermarkets operators from investing in existing or new urban stores. These debates occurred in the context of rising food prices and inflation in general across the economy, and debates over whether concentration within the food system was contributing to higher prices. The burden of rising prices was heaviest on the poor, where little competition among large stores may have contributed to higher prices and fewer options among those least able to pay or to access alternatives. Academics, industry representatives, nutrition advocates and government representatives discussed in a variety of forums what could be done to help business serve those most in need of help.

Supermarket Concentration and Competition in an Era of Rising Food Prices

Throughout the 1970s increasing concerns about the price of food among the American public drew significant national policy attention by consumer interest groups and lawmakers. At a 1975 Congressional Hearing on Food Prices, Chairman George McGovern, Senator from South Dakota introduced the urgency of the topic, explaining: “For the past 2 years, no subject has been the object of so much controversy with so little effective action. I might say, having campaigned for reelection to the Senate in 1974, there was no question I was so repeatedly asked by both producers and housewives and

other consumers as to the question of the farm-to-market spread.” Consumers nationwide looked to the federal government for answers as to why food prices were increasing and what could be done to “protect their paycheck” [98].

By 1977, according to academic marketing researcher Gordon Bloom, a Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor who published widely on the problems of the American food distribution system, food became the single largest portion of the household budget of the average American family. Dr. Bloom cited a U.S. Department of Labor study from 1975, which found that a typical urban family of four with a total income of \$9,588 spent 38 percent of its disposable income on food [33]. Thus, nationwide and across classes, food prices were a serious concern. In the inner city, high food prices posed an even more serious challenge, as consumers were more likely to be poor and therefore least able to accommodate the inflation in prices. As Dr. Bloom explained, “The problem of high food costs faced by central city residents has been chronic for many years, but the recent inflation in food prices has added further gravity to the situation” [34].

Congressional investigations were held throughout the 1970s to uncover why food prices were rising, which components of the food system might be responsible for such price increases, and what could be done about it through policy. One possible explanation was the increasing concentration of the supermarket industry among fewer chains [96]. Higher concentration meant less competition, which mattered because a more competitive market typically suppressed prices. The Assistant to the Director of the Federal Trade Commission, Russell C. Baker, testified before the 1974 Hearing on Food Retailing and Processing Practices before the Joint Economic Committee about the

“strong upward trend” in the concentration of the grocery industry and its effects on price for the supermarket customer [96]. Nationwide, in 1970 the top 20 largest chains accounted for 40 percent of grocery sales, up from 30 percent in 1954. In Washington D.C. where the Hearing was held, four regional chains accounted for about 70 percent of grocery sales in 1967, and that number was thought to be even higher when his testimony was given in 1974 [96].

One consequence of increasing concentration in the grocery industry was that consumers faced fewer alternatives and were more captive to their local market. After all, few shoppers would leave their cities to access groceries in a more competitive regional market. Low-income residents of cities typically relied on public transportation, and therefore according to an economic professor testifying before a 1975 Hearing on Food Prices, their “relevant” market was “very, very small” and highly concentrated [98]. It consisted of those food stores that they could walk to or was on a nearby bus route. A less competitive market also diminished incentive for businesses to innovate and improve efficiency, which was one explanation for why food stores in poor areas could survive and yet offer poor quality and service. A 1978 *Black Enterprise* article, “Let Them Eat Stale Cake” about the lack of supermarkets in black urban areas, explained that: “Since food is a necessary commodity, the marketplace does not penalize for lack of productivity - in other words, no matter how badly run or badly stocked a store is, customers will still shop” [90].

The supermarket industry rejected the allegation that food prices were unfairly high because of concentration in their industry, and provided alternate explanations before local and federal government Hearings. The National Association of Food Chains

president Clarence Adamy, who had represented the supermarket industry in front of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders in 1967, went before the 1976 National Food Marketing Commission Hearing to explain why food prices had been rising nationwide, the diverse challenges faced by the supermarket industry, and what the federal government could do to help [101]. The purpose of the hearing was to discuss two bills introduced in the Senate to create a National Food Marketing Commission, which would investigate the food system and its relationship to food prices in the retail market. Adamy cited a study that showed the supermarket industry actually ranked low among other industries for profitability, contrary to the public perception. As a result, he argued that a “continued search for profiteering as a byproduct of concentration” would be fruitless [101].

Though he acknowledged that government had the right and responsibility to investigate the adequacy and efficiency of the food system, Adamy contended that the government’s proposals were only tangentially related to the “real issues” behind food price increases and therefore could not develop solutions to what was a legitimate public policy problem. He argued that the supermarket industry had been cast as the scapegoat for bigger problems with the economy that trickled down the consumer, and explained that: “The truth is that the real villains in the food industry are the general inflation in our economy and the failure of industry to bring about much needed improvements in productivity” [101]. Just because the FTC and other government agencies “have not found a villain or villains responsible for food price increases” did not mean that commissioning more studies would identify a responsible party. Indeed, there was no culprit to be apprehended – he charged the government with searching for a conspiracy

that did not exist. He cautioned against undue government regulation or administrative burdens on the food industry, which would only make operations more difficult at a time when the government should be helping food retailers invest in productivity and reducing barriers to entry into the marketplace [101].

Testifying before the Washington D.C. City Council, supermarket executive and founder of the Giant chain, Joseph Danzansky, made a similar appeal [20]. He rejected the premise that there was high concentration in the supermarket industry and the construction of the supermarket as the culprit to explain higher prices in the stores. He argued: “In desperation, many citizens cast around for a villain. Unfortunately, there is a small handful of irresponsible politicians and a minority of consumer advocates who play upon this public distress for their own selfish ends. Since everyone shops for food every week, and since food prices have risen tremendously in recent months, they are determined to paint the food retailer as the villain.” [20]. Danzansky explained how food prices reflected macroeconomic factors such as the price of oil, currency devaluation and poor weather conditions that affected crops throughout the world.

The takeaway point from both these testimonies was that any energy spent on identifying a non-existing villain might gratify public anger, but would distract focus away from finding real solutions to rising food prices. A more effective and fair solution would be to assist food retailers in opening new stores, particularly in the inner city, where there were high barriers to entry. Nutrition advocate and founder of the Community Nutrition Institute (CNI), Rod Leonard, testified before the National Food Marketing Commission Hearing that in an effort to reduce oligopolies in the marketplace for food, the effect might actually be to discourage supermarket operations in the city at

all [101]. He commented, “Now, try as I may, I cannot make the connection between breaking up large chains and restoring the quality of food distribution in the city. I do not see how divestiture is going to improve the quality of nutrition for the American people” [101].

High food prices were a particular burden on the urban poor, and as many commentators noted, food prices were rising at the same time that supermarket chains were closing their doors in the inner city. These converging trends put low-income consumers into what Dr. Bloom referred to as “an unbearable vise” [33]. He explained, “On the one hand, higher food prices will make it even more essential for inner city shoppers to economize on their food dollars, while on the other hand there will be fewer and fewer low-cost food stores to make this possible” [33]. The problem, therefore, was why supermarkets were closing, and what the government could do to reverse the trend and ensure that low-income Americans had access to an efficient and wholesome food delivery system.

The Inner City Environment as ‘Hostile to Business’

Throughout the 1970s there were many reports and articles written about the challenges of supermarket operations in America’s inner cities and the steady out-migration of market from the city to the suburbs. What could account for the supermarket “exodus”? The dominant explanation derived from the supermarket industry and several prominent marketing academics that published widely on the issue, which suggested that the inner city was an inhospitable environment for business. Crime, pilferage, high area

unemployment and “welfare dependency” conspired to reduce the profits of inner city supermarkets and make operations more costly and difficult.

In the 1970s, the prospects of the inner city looked bleak. Urban poverty was increasing in concentration, particularly among black households in the inner city. The physical infrastructure of America’s central city ‘slums’ was deteriorating, sanitation services were inadequate, and there were few employment opportunities and widespread unemployment. But the problem most frequently cited as a barrier to inner city supermarket operations was the threat of crime and pilferage. Donald Marion, food and agriculture economist at the University of Massachusetts, conducted an economic analysis of food retail in low-income areas in 1974, and identified the many inter-connected problems that made supermarket operations difficult in the inner city. He concluded that the “inner-city environment is basically hostile to the conduct of business” [19]. Dr. Bloom came to a similar conclusion, stating before a 1976 conference on the problems of the inner city food marketplace hosted by CNI, “Of all the problems which can confront the central city supermarket, none is more deadly than violence” [34]. He described for his audience, which included consumer and nutrition advocacy groups, academics, and lawmakers, the many threats of the inner city environment – including physical violence, harassment of female employees, the likelihood of cars being stolen or vandalized in supermarket parking lots. He assured his audience that these problems were not “imaginary ills” and recounted his experience developing a shopping center that had been closed due to harassment by youths from an adjacent public housing project – he recalled, “Customers were assaulted, employees were threatened by youths with knives, and it was impossible to control organized and rampant pilferage” [34].

Both Marion and Bloom in their many reports and presentations on the subject of inner city supermarket operation over the decade cited rising unemployment, particularly among black men and youths, as an explanatory factor for the growth in crime and delinquency [19, 24, 33, 34]. Employment, like business, was moving to the suburbs leaving behind fewer opportunities for well-paying work in the inner city. Bloom suggested that only increased employment opportunities for both adults and youth were likely to affect the problem of crime in the inner city [33].

Yet both academics stated that morality of inner city residents as at least partially responsible for the inhospitable business environment. Noting that the supermarket was a frequent victim of crime as one of the few repositories of cash in the inner city, Bloom questioned whether the self-service model of the modern supermarket was a viable format. He opined in front of the CNI's Conference on the Food System in 1976 that the "concept of displaying vast amounts of product on open shelves may depend upon a level of morality and regard for private property which simply does not prevail in some central city areas" [34]. Marion suggested in his 1974 analysis that, "There is little question but that the deficiencies in educational and cultural experiences, combined with racial discrimination and poverty, are largely responsible for the problems of the inner city, especially those that are crime oriented and within the non-white community" [19].

Blaming the problems of the poor on the character deficiencies of poor people was not exactly a new tactic in the 1970s, but there was a perceptible shift away from structural explanations for the conditions of the inner city and towards the characteristics of the poor themselves, particularly the black urban poor. For example, employee productivity was cited as a major barrier to successful inner city supermarket operations

by industry observers. As a labor-intensive business, employees counted for a large share of a supermarket's operating costs – therefore labor productivity affected a store's success or failure. Marion explained that since well-qualified employees often refused to work in a chain's inner city locations for fear of violence, supermarkets were increasingly dependent on what he referred to as the “indigenous labor force,” which he said was less efficient [12]. Bloom offered a psychological account for the deficiencies of the inner city worker, explaining that, “The problem is generally one of drive and motivation. In central city stores with a high proportion of black employees, operators have found that motivation is difficult to instill because the employees do not have success images with which to identify... The typical black employee is so scarred by discrimination and past failures that he is afraid to set his hopes too high for fear of being disappointed. Unfortunately, this kind of attitude often engenders low productivity which can eliminate profit in a business which measures profit in a cent on a dollar of sales” [34].

Inner city stores also experienced high rates of shrinkage, defined as the difference between the value of all goods purchased by the supermarket and the value of its combined sales and inventory. Shrinkage could occur in a variety of ways, including the habit of grazing where customers would sample food products as they shopped throughout the store. Theft, by both customers and employees, was a major source of shrinkage. There were also more reports of inadvertent damage to perishable products in supermarkets in lower-income areas, as customers might take more items than they could afford, and leave them incorrectly throughout the store rather than putting them back in the appropriate case [36, 39, 101].

Inner city supermarket operators reported other challenges as well. In areas where

many customers received federal assistance, like welfare payments (at the time, Aid to Families with Dependent Children) or food stamps, the volume of sales would fluctuate severely throughout the month, making it difficult to maintain inventory and efficiently employ staff [11]. Banks were hesitant to lend to inner city grocery operators, and so the terms of loans were higher for any borrowed money used to invest in inner city locations [9]. Inner city taxes were both high and increasing as businesses were leaving the city [27]. Marion reported in 1974 that existing retailers felt trapped by their investments, and many wished to close the doors to their inner city locations, however – “With most, if not all of their life's earnings invested in their businesses, and little or no market for disposing of inner-city businesses, they feel powerless to make a change though pessimistic about the future” [19].

Framing the Problem: Place or People?

Industry observers were not optimistic about the future of inner city marketing. In 1974, Marion commented in a report that there was good reason to believe that the plight of the inner city consumer will worsen if solutions could not be found [19]. He concluded that, “In the aggregate, the present marketing situation in inner-city areas must be viewed as discouraging. The poverty and racial difficulties largely at the root of the marketing problems, are firmly entrenched and will not be easily eliminated. In the meantime, inner-city residents need services, jobs, and an opportunity to become full and equal members of the business world and of society in general” [19]. In a 1976 report, Marion stressed the need for a variety of solutions targeting the inter-related problems of the inner city and posited what could be expected in the absence of any immediate policy response:

“Expectedly, the food marketing system serving inner-city residents would continue to deteriorate until such time as there was no longer an inner-city ghetto. Established chains would continue to leave the ‘embattled’ neighborhoods in favor of the less troublesome, more profitable outer areas, leaving the neighborhoods with even fewer supermarkets than are presently available” [24].

Both authors tangentially referenced the “root” problems related to the problems of inner city food retail operations, which was the impoverished racial ghetto, but those problems were considered outside of their area of expertise and in need of long-term policy solutions. Marion cited the underlying causes of the crime and violence problem as “cultural and educational deficiencies, poverty, and racial prejudice,” but concluded the situation was grave and demanded immediate remedial action [24]. He identified three distinct policy approaches that could be taken in the short-term – assistance directly to supermarket businesses to encourage development in inner cities, modifying the inner city environment to make it less hostile to business, or assistance to consumers “to reduce the disadvantages they suffer” [24].

The dominant policy discussions of the decade focused on the first two options, how to attract businesses to the inner city through subsidies and inducements, rather than how to either protect or subsidize consumers who saw decreasing purchasing power of their income and food assistance [27]. Such policies included government assistance with site acquisition through land write-downs, financing and insurance assistance programs, and a variety of tax incentives and abatements [24]. Another commonly cited policy direction was to support joint ventures between community groups and governmental or quasi-governmental agencies like community development corporations, which would

disperse the investment risk across private, public and non-profit stakeholders [33].

Supermarket representatives also asked for a reduction in red tape and better coordination among municipal agencies to make the permitting and development process easier [90].

This focus on assisting business and place, rather than people, follows the subtle shift in the framing of the problem of the urban food retail distribution system – that the inner city was a place “inhospitable” to business. Naturalistic metaphors abounded.

Bloom provided an analysis of the city “eco-culture,” comparing the inner city neighborhood to a niche environment [34]. He cautioned that there was no single city eco-culture, but rather each city varied “in their characteristics like humans.” He explained, “Some are vibrant and growing; others are decaying and stagnant” [34]. In various forums, industry insiders and community interest groups discussed what would make a business “viable” in the inner city. A trade publication asked in 1978, what government could do to “save” downtown? [37]. Thus, the inner city was constructed as a living ecosystem that required care to preserve its “vitality” and to prevent “decay” [33, 34, 37]. The residents of the inner city were one component of its health – and since they were widely constructed as being culturally deficient or prone to criminality, they were at best a part of the problem that needed saving, and at worst, one of the causes of the problem in the first place.

One effect of naturalistic language is that it dilutes or obscures agency. The supermarket was said to “migrate” to the suburbs, as if it were part of a herd, rather than the result of a decision made by corporate executives. By 1976, Marion explains that supermarket management was designed for suburbia, and the format could not “survive” in the inner city [24]. The suburbs were identified in the discourse as prosperous, growing,

and peaceful – in direct contrast to the deteriorating, violent inner city. It was therefore little wonder when supermarket “flight” occurred. For example, in the first half of the 1970s, the nation’s first supermarket chain, the A&P, closed 250 of its urban stores at the same time that it opened 100 locations in the suburbs [87]. This “flight” or “migration” seemed like a natural evolution, obscuring the complex factors that influenced decision-making during this time period.

Complicating the Narrative

There is evidence, however, that chain supermarkets divested from the inner city for more complicated and nuanced reasons than the naturalistic frame would suggest. There is no definitive answer within the discourse of this era whether inner city stores were not profitable or were rather less profitable than their suburban counterparts. Large chain markets may have decided that the level of profitability was too low in the inner city to maintain their investment. As has been explained, inner city chain supermarkets were typically aging and obsolete, so the decision may have been between renovating existing older urban stores and starting fresh in the suburbs. It may have been easier to close urban stores than to rebuild a structure on par with the new, large, modern developments occurring in the suburbs. Even so, profitability was likely not the sole motive for supermarket location decision. Marion made a passing comment in a 1974 report that, “Most of the retailers interviewed in the study stated that no amount of profit could make low-income area locations attractive to them” [19].

The discourse refers to urban stores closing, but it is unclear if those markets were closed in neighborhoods that had long been predominantly black or had recently been

home to white ethnic communities who had since moved in great numbers to the suburbs. According to a 1978 article in *Black Enterprise* magazine, “No large ghetto is without several shuttered buildings, that once were outlets of a major supermarket chain” [90]. But in 1974, Marion explained, “Not an insignificant part of the problem of inner-city marketing firms results from the pronounced change in the character of the markets, following shifts in residential patterns. The marketing system there was designed to serve a market that has since moved to the suburbs” [19]. The supermarkets experiencing trouble in the inner city were to some significant degree stores that had been established when areas were predominantly white and recently transitioned to predominantly black – Marion explains that, as such these stores therefore offered products and services that were “ill-suited” for their new clientele [19].

In 1972, the Supermarket Institute (now known as the Food Marketing Institute) a supermarket trade interest group, released a manual aimed at helping managers run successful markets in America’s inner cities, titled: “Managing a Super Market in a Low-Income Community” [14]. As stated in the manual, the “modern American super market is best typified by the large, new and efficient operations so common in our middle to upper income communities.” But, it cautioned, there were other supermarkets, older, smaller and “perhaps not so efficient” in low-income areas, and these stores presented operating challenges that must be dealt with if the stores were to be successful. According to the manual, “these problems are rather subtle and may be compounded by overtones of racism, discrimination and charges of exploitation.” The guide was intended to be helpful to managers of such stores (who presumably, were quite familiar with the problems of operating stores for low-income clientele), and for any future operations that

might be developed, as they cited there were “many proposals, both corporate and governmental, to build new super markets in low-income areas” [14].

The remainder of the manual explained the necessity of building strong relationships with the surrounding community and how good will might be generated. Stocking ethnic foods, accurately advertising specials and maintaining sufficient stock, and providing a tidy and sanitary store environment topped the list. Controlling pests and maintaining a clean store was cited as more difficult in low-income areas, since many of those stores operated under crowded conditions, were “older than normal, and located in aging or decaying areas.” The manual also suggested that managers could create strong relationships with the community by hiring and training local residents and participating in community cultural events. Being a valuable part of the community was seen as one tactic to improve store security, since the manual explained: “Although there are no national or regional studies to prove that low-income areas have more security problems than other areas, it is obvious that security is one of the low-income manager's problems” [14].

Some in the food and marketing industry recognized a business opportunity in helping stores transition their merchandising mix and advertising to a primarily black clientele. In 1972, an advertising publication explained “How to Survive (and Thrive) in the Inner-City Market,” which described the ways to access the great “opportunity presented by the Black consumer market” [13]. In 1979, the supermarket trade publication *Progressive Grocer* reported on the emerging market for merchandising consultants in their article “Building a Lifeline to Ghetto Supermarkets” [41]. The customers of such consultants were the smaller independent chains and individual owners

that had taken over supermarkets closed by the large regional supermarket chains. These companies, and the success of the independents, suggested that with the proper merchandising and community relationships, supermarkets could be profitable in the inner city [41].

The Solution of Black Ownership

It is possible that, though largely unspoken or only insinuated, chain supermarket corporations did not see the black inner city consumer as their market, and preferred to operate in predominantly white areas without the so-called “racial difficulties” or “racial conflicts” they associated with the inner city [19,34]. Black ownership of supermarkets was suggested widely, therefore, as a possible solution that could be applied to more than one problem. In the decade prior, civil rights advocates had fought to put minority business development on the agenda to address discrimination in employment and commercial lending, as well as the preponderance of white-owned stores in black neighborhoods. Supermarket closures represented a window of opportunity for black entrepreneurs. In 1972 *Black Enterprise* magazine documented on the trend in their article, “Super Markets: Blacks Take Over Inner City Sites Left Vacant by Chains,” reporting on the major investments being made by black firms in inner cities nationwide, including Watts, New York City, Washington D.C., and Baltimore [87]. In 1974, Marion touted the benefits of black ownership – he argued that black grocery operators may have better relationships with the community and be more responsive to the preferences of black clientele, and “it combines a possibility for revitalizing business in low-income areas with an opportunity for blacks to enjoy greater social and economic self-

determination” [19].

These businesses, however, faced several challenges. First, the buildings that had formerly housed chain supermarkets tended to be small and in poor condition. When J. Bruce Llewellyn bought the Fedco chain of supermarkets in New York City, he explained to *Black Enterprise* that, "the first thing we did was remodel and update the equipment - all of the stores were filthy and obsolete" [90]. Second, existing stores were also smaller - typically less than 10,000 square feet, while new supermarkets were being built in the suburbs were more than 20,000 square feet [87]. Acquiring sufficient financing at fair terms was also a constant problem. In fact, discrimination in lending was an important reason behind low rates of black entrepreneurship in general. Supermarkets needed capital investment to open their storefront and stock a full line of inventory, but as Bloom described in 1977, "Such equity capital is simply not available today, either from the government or from private venture funds. If minority ownership and operation is viewed as a viable alternative means of providing food distribution services in inner city areas, it must be supported by a realistic equity funding program" [33].

Throughout the discourse, the Small Business Administration (SBA) was cited as an appropriate government agency to assist minority business development in the inner city, though it too was accused of discriminatory practices. *Black Enterprise* ran a feature on the owner of the two largest black-owned supermarkets in New Jersey in 1976 who operated two urban markets, one in a predominantly black neighborhood, the other in a predominantly white area [89]. Though his stores were large and successful, he had difficulty finding the credit necessary to maintain his inventory. The supermarket owner commented to *Black Enterprise* that, "Lending institutions have got to stop looking at

black business statements saying, ‘They didn't make any money so we're not going to lend them money.’ They must look closely find out what capital that company needs and give them that capital. If a guy needs \$150,000 don't give him \$50,000. All you're doing is killing him" [89].

There was some discussion both by academics and black businessmen that despite these various challenges, black owners had an advantage in operating in the inner city. Llewellyn described how the size of his stores meant they could be responsive to community needs more quickly, and that his management better understood the preferences of their clientele [39]. But as *Black Enterprise* wrote in 1978, “The fact that Llewellyn is a black supermarket owner has not made his problems any less real or acute as a retailer in inner-city areas” [90]. For example, his headquarters suffered serious damage during the New York City blackout in 1977 [90]. In a 1975 round table discussion with black business leaders hosted by *Black Enterprise* magazine, Llewellyn was asked why supermarket chains were abandoning the inner city[88]. He replied: “Being very realistic again about the situation, crime is higher in the ghetto; being very realistic about the situation, insurance rates are higher in the ghetto; being very realistic about the situation, vandalism is higher in the ghetto; being very realistic about the situation the amount of spendable income on the part of the people who live in the ghetto is less than in the outside white community” [88]. *Black Enterprise*, a publication dedicated to promoting black business, was not optimistic about the realistic prospects of black-owned supermarkets as a solution for the inadequacies of the inner city food system. In 1972, it predicted that the entrance of black owners into the supermarket business would continue to the “torturous” [87].

During the *Black Enterprise* round table discussion there was a lack of consensus about whether there was a special responsibility of black business owners to serve black consumers or communities [88]. Some argued that the responsibility of black business was to go where it could succeed, and to take advantages of the same opportunities in the suburbs, and even internationally, that white corporations were pursuing. John Procope, publisher of the *Amsterdam News*, rejected the notion that black supermarket ownership would accomplish its dual aims – of providing an adequate food supply to inner city residents and creating successful business ventures to generate wealth for black entrepreneurs. He argued that operating a supermarket in the “ghetto areas” was a double-edged sword: “I don't necessarily feel there's an opportunity for black entrepreneurs. You have to assume that if it's difficult for a large chain to operate a small store in the ghetto, it's going to be doubly difficult for a black entrepreneur who has limited experience, and lacks wholesale warehousing facilities, and without structure of marketing, produce and meats - not to mention lack of capital. I don't see that as an opportunity: I see it as a trap. I see it as a trap because it looks like an opportunity.” When asked who was going to serve the black community, if not black business, Mr. Procope answered, “I feel that the sociologists can deal with that situation. I have to look at it from a strictly business point of view” [88].

The facilitator of the round table discussion, *Black Enterprise* publisher Earl Graves, felt the question of responsibility for meeting the food needs of black communities was not resolved satisfactorily. He argued in conclusion that, “After all, people are going to eat, these people in the ghetto are going to eat and buy things and someone is going to service them. If the large white chains leave and black business

doesn't go in, someone is going to go in. The needs are going to be met" [88]. However, whether those needs were going to be met was an open question. There is evidence from the previous decade, even before the supermarkets were accused of abandoning the city, that the food system was not adequately or fairly serving black residents of the inner city. And hunger and malnutrition were troubling consequences of this failure.

The Problem: Leaving Behind People Who Have to Eat

Throughout the decade, there was a growing concern that the lack of large, modern supermarkets in the inner city would affect the nutritional adequacy of the urban poor. Representatives from the supermarket industry reported before Congressional hearings that their consumers nationwide were themselves expressing interest in nutrition and nutritional information at unprecedented levels [102]. A key advocacy group, the Community Nutrition Institute, created forums for the urban supermarket policy discourse to occur, in an effort to move the issue of urban hunger and nutrition onto the national political agenda [22]. The interest group hosted a conference in 1976, where Marion, Bloom and other academics, government representatives, and consumer advocates met to discuss the inadequacies of the inner city food distribution system and what might be done about it. The invitation to the conference explained that all could agree that the cost of food was higher and the quality lower in the city, but no one could agree why "this condition exists, let alone propose solutions to this national nutrition problem" [22]. It continued, "About all that happens is one group points fingers of blame at another." CNI vowed to take a different approach, and to use the workshop to discuss the causes of and solutions to the problems of the urban food system [22]. Another

conference, with many of the same actors, was hosted the following year by the Joint Center for Political Studies [26].

If there was a consensus about solutions at these major conferences, both held in Washington D.C., it was that no one really knew what would work. Bloom and others questioned whether the modern supermarket was suited for the inner city, or if they should be thinking about another retail food distribution options all together [25, 34]. Gary, Indiana Mayor Richard Hatcher suggested that supermarkets be regulated by the government like a public utility, a proposal that *Black Enterprise* identified as “horrifying to supermarket retailers” [39]. Another unlikely suggestion was that the government could extend the military post-exchange system to the nation’s inner cities. Various propositions were outlined in *Progressive Grocer’s* 1978 article, “Inner City Supers: Is There a Future?” from the proposals for regulating supermarkets as utilities, to creating joint public private ventures, or building supermarkets on the urban fringe and bussing inner city residents to the stores [39]. Despite all the high-level policy discussion, *Progressive Grocer* concluded that the most likely possibility would be that the “industry will do too little and the government will do practically nothing.” Worse, the magazine cautioned its readers of supermarket executives and operators, the uncertain situation was ripe for an ambitious politician to “politicize” the issue. If that were to be the case, “grocers will look back in fondness to the ‘quiet’ days of their gentle conversations with the consumer movement” [39].

The supermarket industry was clearly on defense – they had been villainized for high food prices and now feared political repercussions (namely, regulation) if they could not adequately serve the needs of the inner city. The industry’s tactic had been to pass the

blame onto the character of the inner city and its residents, which made successful operations difficult or impossible without government intervention. There were few voices speaking on behalf of the residents themselves, and what the shortage of efficient grocery stores would mean for them. *Black Enterprise*, in the 1978 article “Let Them Eat Stale Cake”, outlined the issues of supermarket scarcity in the inner city, which acknowledged the problems that supermarkets had in operating there but also considered the experience of urban residents [90]. They concluded, “The problem, of course, is that supermarkets are leaving behind people who have to eat. And if the exodus of supermarkets from the cities continues, the question of food distribution in the inner cities may become the most serious one facing urban America. Food is, after all, basic. Everyone has to eat. But everyone, it seems, does not have to eat well” [90].

The article reminded its readers that supermarkets had a checkered history in black neighborhoods, and the problem wasn’t just that many were leaving, but that they had consistently failed to provide quality food at reasonable prices in the city in general. And this was why supermarkets had been common targets for destruction during the urban riots of the previous decade. Rather than a community asset, they were seen as “an economic and emotional rip-off, supermarkets were those overpriced, dirty, poorly stocked and badly managed stores you had to shop in at least once a week” [90]. Inner city supermarkets were described disparagingly – as overcrowded places with “long, slow-moving lines to buy spoiled meat, stale bread, or bruised produce at prices higher than at the same chain's store selling fresh food in the better part of town.” The article indicts supermarkets for failing to invest in modern, efficient stores to serve the inner, and claimed the lack of investment reflected the lack of value the industry saw in its inner

city customers. They explained, “If we are what we eat, supermarkets in the inner city have long confirmed what society thinks poor people are.” Essentially, they argued, the supermarket industry gave poor people the stores that they thought they deserved [90].

There was little discussion about developing policies that could directly help consumers. Rather, consumers would have their needs met through policies that effectively attracted businesses to the inner city. The proposals that sought to directly impact poor consumers included improving or increasing food assistance programs to the poor and consumer education. At a 1976 Congressional Hearing on the Food Stamps program, a representative from the National Urban Coalition argued to reform and expand the Food Stamp program because, “the right to life includes the right to food, to adequate nourishment” [100]. They emphasized that the cost to prevent malnutrition were much lower than the costs to treat its victims.

Marion, too, offered ideas for direct assistance to consumers through expanding welfare or food assistance, but cautioned efforts would need to be taken to circumvent the fraud that existed in those programs [19]. Another concern was the crime associated with check-cashing, which was a service often offered to the poor by supermarkets since, as Marion noted, there were few banks in the inner city. Marion argued that check cashing attracted more crime to the supermarket, which was therefore counterproductive. He suggested identification cards for welfare recipients to reduce fraud, and more check-cashing outlets in the inner city “to relieve local businesses of the burden of assuming the banking function in addition to their chosen line of business” [19]. Marion also suggested consumer education programs to assist the poor to purchase more healthful products, even though he also acknowledged the studies that indicated poor shoppers already

purchased more nutrition per food dollar than other consumers. He surmised that consumer nutrition information could help nonetheless, since “this situation may more nearly be a product of the customary diet of low-income families, especially non-whites, than it is a result of careful and informed buying decisions” [19]. Unlike the policy proposals of the 1960s, these consumer-oriented policy interventions did not call for radically transforming existing policies or social structures.

Supermarkets in the 1970s: Summary and Conclusions

In the 1970s, the food access policy discourse focused on the problems of operating supermarkets in the inner city and what might be done to improve those conditions. All actors acknowledged that for inner city residents, the stakes for solving the problem were high – just at the time food prices were on the rise, supermarket chains accelerated their closures of urban locations. The supermarket was widely understood as the most efficient system yet created for delivering quality food at reasonable prices, but by the 1970s, supermarkets were constructed in the policy discourse as entities that were incongruent with the inner city environment. The large, modern, efficient suburban store had become the ideal image of what a supermarket actually *was*, and this new creation was out of place in the very landscape in which it was created. But supermarkets had been in the city since their invention in decades prior – these stores were smaller, outmoded, and less efficient than their suburban counterparts, and implicated in the charges of exploitation and poor quality of merchandise in the 1960s. As a 1978 *Black Enterprise* article argued, “It was no accident that during the urban riots of the 1960s, the one store inevitably looted and often burned to the ground was the local supermarket”

[90].

By the middle of the 1970s, this exploitation discourse was little referenced. The problem that confronted society was how to feed the inner city efficiently and at a reasonable cost, despite all the challenges for larger companies to operate there. It seems that in the out-migration to the suburbs the supermarket “adapted” to its new environment, evolving into something that could no longer survive in the city [34]. An academic report from 1972 outlined the possible solutions for the lack of efficient food markets in the inner city, and dismissed the option of building new, modern supermarkets even with federal funding, because “most studies have shown the supermarket to be best suited for middle and higher income areas” [11]. Similarly, Bloom asked, “Is the supermarket an appropriate vehicle for the distribution of food in the central city? In many respects, the modern supermarket is better adapted to suburban than to city shopping” [34].

And yet, the supermarket was the best way the industry knew how to deliver high quality foods at low prices. If the problem wasn’t solved, most could agree that the poor would suffer – from poor nutrition, hunger, and from a further deteriorating commercial sector in the inner city. Marion cautioned in 1974 of a downward spiral if business was allowed to fail in the inner city: “All of society suffers - especially the residents of low-income areas from eroding business and employment opportunities, a declining tax base, a reduction in the quality and quantity of public services available, and a resulting environment that is generally depressing and demoralizing” [19].

However, it was unclear and highly contested how to solve the problem of inner city operations, given the difficulty in acquiring land, high taxes and insurance rates, and issues of crime, qualified personnel and community relations. The policy discourse in the

1970's centered around how those problems might be overcome, with some (but not too much, according to the supermarket industry) government intervention. Joseph Danzansky of Giant was prominent in advocating for municipal land-write downs, since he cited the cost of land in the city compared to the suburbs as the primary barrier to entrance into the market. He claimed if land costs could be made comparable, supermarkets could absorb the other higher costs associated with operations there [20]. Others suggested alternative thinking – such as building markets in fringe urban areas or building smaller convenience type stores for the inner city [25, 33]. Gordon Bloom suggested that a smaller type of supermarket could be built in the inner city, specifically designed to deal with the issues of pilferage and vandalism. He recognized that this might not be well-received by inner city residents, posing the question before the audience of CNI's 1976 Conference on the Food System, "Would city residents accept such an institution or would they insist upon having the same kind of store as the suburbs?" [34].

Representatives of the supermarket industry were on the defensive, and actively fought against the perception that they were "villains" in the narrative about the problems of the inadequacies of the food marketplace for the urban poor [101]. They too, they argued, were victims of the environment, and were potentially victims of an over-zealous government that might aim to solve the problem through over-regulation. Academic industry observers Bloom and Marion were consistent in their construction of the inner city as "hostile" to business. This discourse subtly shifted the locus of the problem of the inner city food system from the poor, to the problems of businesses trying to operate in poor neighborhoods. The poor were implicated in that problematic environment – through claims of pilferage, violence, and deficient cultural values. Marion's takeaway

from the CNI conference, shared as part of testimony at the 1976 National Food Marketing Commission Hearing, was that: “There are many things to be learned from the exchange of views and information which occurred at our conference, and I’m still sorting these out. But one is clear. Supermarket management cannot be held responsible for the larger social problem of which they are only a part” [101].

The “larger social problem” was considered outside the purview of the supermarket debate –marketing academics and supermarket industry insiders focused on concrete policies that could directly assist businesses to operate in poor areas, including financing for black-owned supermarkets, or policies that could make the inner city more suitable and attractive for businesses to operate. At the 1977 conference held by the Joint Center for Political Studies, Bloom argued for government intervention, asking the rhetorical questions; “Is the supermarket in the inner city any less entitled to governmental help than the farmer with his cows? The government subsidizes businessmen who are adversely affected by destructive foreign competition. Are the ravages of inner-city blight any less real?” [33]. Few of the policy discussions focused on direct aid or protection for the poor consumer, and any sustained indictment of ghetto formation or structural racism in creating the problems of the poor, unlike the discourse of the previous decade. As we will see, this discourse set the terms for food access policy debates of the coming decades.

4-6 The 1980s: Hunger, the Private Market, and the Role of Government

Overview

In the 1980s, the problem of hunger in America was highly visible. As had been asked during the late 1960s, when images of Robert Kennedy's trip to the Mississippi Delta shocked Americans nationwide, lawmakers and citizen groups wondered how there could be so much hunger in a land of plenty and surplus. During the decade, recession and economic restructuring left many households in need of federal safety nets precisely at a time when the governing political ideology was to reduce direct government assistance. The economy was losing industrial jobs that provided steady employment and benefits to the nation's working classes. Poverty was on the rise; by 1988 it had increased 10 percent since the start of the decade [105]. Homelessness emerged as a national social problem at an unprecedented level. Inflation and rising energy costs left food as an "escape valve" for the economic pressures, as spending on food was squeezed to a smaller share of household budgets [104]. Anti-hunger advocates cited insufficient federal assistance through government food programs and the absence of large, efficient, competitively priced supermarkets from low-income areas as key barriers for the poor to access adequate food and nutrition [104]. In 1983 President Reagan had cut \$2 billion from the Food Stamp program, and followed by a \$1.5 billion proposed cut from the program in his 1984 budget [103]. Thus, poor households had less money to spend on groceries, and often those limited food dollars were spent at the high-priced independent food stores in poor urban neighborhoods. Children and the elderly were considered by advocates to be especially vulnerable to the medical problems associated with inadequate access to food [105].

In the private market, the supermarket industry was cautiously optimistic that some urban areas offered a promising business opportunity, if certain barriers could be

overcome. The suburban grocery market was beginning to get saturated and overcrowded by chains, leaving companies to look for new, “untapped” areas [48]. At the same time, in some cities the redevelopment of historic downtown areas helped to spur a renewed interest among affluent households for living in urban communities. However, according to the supermarket industry, the lack of high quality grocery stores may have been slowing or dissuading the return of these households to the city. In the 1980s, and certainly in the coming decades, the development of supermarkets became firmly entwined with the goals of urban redevelopment more generally. However, when the industry turned to the city with new interest, it was met with some resistance from community groups and local lawmakers who worried about the impact of large stores on urban communities and commercial districts.

Throughout the decade, community-based advocates and civil rights groups fought both to stem the tide of cuts to federal assistance programs and to expand the options for grocery shopping within poor neighborhoods. There was a surge in local action to coordinate public and private efforts to improve food access, particularly for the most vulnerable households. Many of these efforts were community-based and aimed at developing capacity and self-determination. States and cities created task forces on hunger and food policy, bringing together citizens groups, non-profits, food industry representatives, and local lawmakers to design and implement local solutions. Throughout the decade, they lobbied the federal government for support for these ventures, particularly through capital investment. The supermarket industry, with its renewed interest in developing downtown stores and taking advantage of the

“understored” inner city, was a potential partner for community-based groups in their effort to improve food access for the most vulnerable communities [51].

Defining Hunger and Debating the Role of Government

The problem of hunger in America reached new heights of political visibility throughout the 1980s, prompting public and private action across many forums. Recalling the discourse of the late 1960s, hunger among America’s poor was considered a “national shame” [103]. Yet the discourse around hunger and malnutrition in the 1980s occurred in a political context in which the ideas about the role of private enterprise and the role of government were radically different than before. During the 1960s and the era of President Johnson’s Great Society, poverty in the midst of plenty was an affront to national ideals. In response, the Johnson Administration created the Office of Economic Opportunity, which administered the War on Poverty programs. Many of the key witnesses in the various hearings on consumer affairs and exploitation who advocated for consumer protection and action were local or national representatives from OEO offices [6, 133]. The federal government articulated a responsibility to combat economic injustice in its effort to eliminate poverty and hunger across the nation.

During the 1980s, however, the Reagan Administration articulated a different role for the federal government in responding to the problems of hunger and malnutrition. At a time when poverty was rising, the economy was in recession, and economic restructuring meant a great loss in industrial jobs so important to the stability of the working class, the Reagan administration cut federal assistance programs for the poor and encouraged greater activity in the private sector [104]. Hunger was on the agenda and

seen as an unacceptable state of affairs, but there was an ideological debate about how government should respond to the problem, and disagreements about the effectiveness of federal assistance programs in either addressing or perhaps perpetuating the problems of poverty and hunger [104].

In 1983 President Reagan issued an executive order establishing the President's Task Force on Food Assistance, which was charged with analyzing the efficacy of existing food assistance programs and making recommendations for how those programs could be improved [94]. In its final report, published in 1984, the Task Force was careful in its working definition of hunger. Hunger, the report explained, was not coterminous with poverty or unemployment. Though the unemployed and the poor may be more likely to be hungry, not all poor Americans or the unemployed could be considered hungry. Furthermore, the report acknowledged that the word hunger covered a variety of interpretations to different speakers and listeners. The Task Force used the word hunger in the report in two senses, writing: "First, hunger can be defined as a condition in which the level of nutrition necessary for good health is not being met because one lacks access to food. Second, hunger, in a looser sense of the word, also means a situation in which someone cannot obtain an adequate amount of food, even if the shortage is not prolonged enough to cause health problems" [94]. The report discouraged the blanket use of the word "hungry" to describe people on food assistance programs, which represented a heterogeneous population with different food and health needs.

In addition to what the Task Force report referred to as the "traditional poor" of elderly people and single parent households, those reliant on food assistance also included "street people" and the "new poor" [94]. Street people meant the homeless, who

were described as suffering from a number of pathologies, including “total disconnection from family and society, mental disturbance, or drug and-or alcohol abuse.” In contrast, the “new poor” were described as “the victims of recent economic hard times” – perhaps those workers who lost industrial jobs during the economic structuring of the decade. The report cited little evidence of under-nutrition, or clinical hunger and its attendant illnesses in the nation, except perhaps among the homeless. It was the second definition of hunger that was more widely used in public discourse – the state of not having enough to eat, even if a physician could not detect its effects. This state of hunger was called “a social, not a medical, problem” by the Task Force – and as such, the debate about its causes, prevalence, and solutions was inherently political [94].

While acknowledging some evidence that certain households had difficulty obtaining adequate access to food, the Task Force concluded that it could not measure the extent of hunger in America with the metrics available to them. The absence of a reliable metric for hunger contributed to what the Task Force Report called, “a climate in which policy discussions become unhelpfully heated and unsubstantiated assertions are then substituted for hard information” [94] The Task Force could not substantiate allegations of widespread hunger and distress.

Furthermore, the Task Force asserted that federal assistance was such that no household should go hungry, since the Food Stamp allotment was based on a basic diet, known as the Thrifty Food Plan. The report explained, “Although this diet may not be one which would be selected by people with higher incomes, it is constructed to be nutritionally adequate for the vast majority of people.” And since the Food Stamp program was an entitlement, there was “no reason for anyone to suffer nutritional

deprivation.” In addition to the support of federal food assistance programs that ran counter-cyclical to the economy, expanding during recessionary periods, the Task Force report trumpeted the “concurrent humanitarian response” from private individuals, voluntary associations and private enterprise that augmented the needs of the poor. The private sector was applauded for making food available for low or no cost to needy Americans through increased commercial donations. Policy changes facilitated these increased donations – the Task Force report cited “better tax incentives encouraging commercial donations; establishment of new channels for the distribution of donated food, such as food banks; and increases in government commodity distribution” as key factors. The Task Force cautioned against the interpretation that the rise of private market donations meant there was greater hunger in America, rather it was due to the “greater effort and ingenuity” of charities, which identified new sources of food donations for the needy. The Food Marketing Institute, the supermarket industry’s primary trade association group, also “actively urged” its members to donate to food banks [94].

The Task Force hailed such charitable activities by corporations and voluntary organizations as an integral part of the nation’s food assistance safety net. Though national figures on charitable food assistance organizations were unavailable, the report highlighted the work of Second Harvest, a large national network of food banks and pantries, which distributed more than 100 million pounds of food to local charities in 1983 alone. The amount of food Second Harvest distributed doubled in the two years prior to the Task Force report. The report warned that the existence of private soup kitchens, food banks, and food pantries did not “imply the failure of federal programs,” but rather complimented federal programs since they argued that “the private sector is

often more efficient in meeting specialized or localized needs.”²⁷ As such, the report recommends policies that would make the legal environment more conducive to private sector donations, whether through reforming tax laws or limiting the liability of those who donate food to charity in good faith [94].

Whether the social safety net programs of the 1960s had improved the situation of the poor was up for debate in this era. Despite an increase in the federal commitment to the poor and the elderly, reports suggested hunger was widespread. In 1962, all social programs for those disadvantaged groups comprised 6 percent of Gross National Product, compared to 12 percent at the time of the Task Force report (1984) [94]. The authors of the report argued that federal assistance programs (whether food stamps or income supports) should not be considered a permanent solution for the problems of hunger and poverty, rather they were meant to be a temporary safety net in periods of distress. The Task Force concluded that economic growth was the most efficient way to eliminate poverty and so policies that support growth should be the priority of the federal government [94].

The authors cautioned against potential adverse effects of assistance to the needy, rather than a commitment to overall growth in the economy, explaining: “The public and private safety net, while it does provide an adequate stopgap, sometimes also perpetuates poverty and dependence” [94]. Specifically, the report cited “a powerful incentive for dissolving the family” within Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and

²⁷ Susan Fischer, Deputy Director of Second Harvest, testified publicly before the Task Force in 1983 that “food donated by the private sector, and even USDA surplus commodities, will never be the answer to the problem of hunger in America.” She continued, “Private sector efforts, while laudable, are not a substitute for a fully funded, equitable and efficiently managed system of federal nutrition programs.” Her comments point to a central tension in federal food policy – what should be the responsibility of the federal government in providing for the welfare of its citizens, and what is the appropriate role of private businesses and charities?

disincentives for work within a variety of programs, which conspired to perpetuate the poverty the programs aimed to relieve [94].

Federal poverty assistance, as constructed within this ideological point of view, was part of the problem rather than a fundamental responsibility of government. The report of the Task Force on Food Assistance reflected the Reagan Administration's ideology and the political context in which the debate about food access and hunger occurred throughout the 1980s. Despite of, or perhaps in response to, this withdrawal of federal commitment to direct anti-poverty and anti-hunger programs, civic groups across the nation, sometimes in partnership with local governments, sought creative and effective ways to address the inter-related problems of hunger, inadequate food access, and racialized inequalities in American cities.

Supermarket Scarcity and the Crisis of Hunger in America

Advocates for the poor argued that hunger was the result of insufficient federal food assistance, particularly in an era of cuts to social programs, and the lack of competitively priced, high quality supermarkets in low-income areas. As had been argued in prior decades, those least able to pay for groceries were in a vise between high food prices and the few, small-scale stores in their neighborhood. Inner city residents that were least mobile, such as the elderly or parents of young children, were considered most captive to the marketplace of their immediate neighborhood. Anti-hunger advocates lobbied for more supermarkets as well as federal and local support for market alternatives to improve access to quality food at fair prices. Increasing food assistance, access to grocery stores, and community-based market solutions were needed in particular to

protect the most vulnerable groups affected by lack of adequate access - children and the elderly.

Concerned community-based groups and lawmakers identified unequal access to food as a problem of justice. The same year the Task Force on Food Assistance released its final report, the House of Representatives held a Hearing of the Select Committee on Hunger [104]. The Committee Chairman, Democratic Representative from Texas and future chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, Mickey Leland introduced the problem of hunger as indivisible from the experience of poverty and the lack of economic opportunity. Poverty and deprivation were “killing children” in America; Rep. Leland reported that the infant mortality rate among black children in the Mississippi county hosting the Congressional Hearing was higher than that of many less developed Caribbean nations [104]. Testimony submitted to that Hearing by a civil rights law firm, Public Advocates, condemned the consequences of the unequal distribution of quality food in America, stating: “A grave economic injustice exists when, in this agriculturally rich nation, inner city residents are suffering from chronic under nutrition caused in significant part by the unavailability of fresh fruits and vegetables, the poor quality of meats, fish, and poultry, and the exorbitant costs of all food” [104]. In Hartford, Connecticut, a community coalition investigated the adequacy of their local food system and concluded, “The inequity of this situation, and of the system that created it, must be changed so that food, a basic human need, is equally available to all persons at a reasonable price” [104]. Hunger was not just a national shame; it was a product of injustice.

Within the political discourse about the problem of urban supermarket scarcity there were a variety of explanations for the reasons why supermarkets divested from the inner city, as well as the time period in which it occurred. The testimony from Public Advocates to the 1984 Select Committee on Hunger argued that these troubling conditions were a new phenomenon [104]. Originally written in 1979, the testimony was actually a petition sent to the Carter Administration by Public Advocates on behalf of a national coalition of food access and civil rights organizations including the NAACP, National Association of Neighborhoods, National Black Police Officers Association, California Inner City Food Coalition, Hartford Food Systems Inc., Boston Urban Gardeners, among others. Referring to a time prior to the 1960s, the petition claimed that, “Access to wholesome foodstuffs at reasonable prices was not difficult for urbanites twenty years ago, when dozens of small groceries owned and operated by local persons and independently-owned regional chains served inner city communities” [136].

According to the petition, throughout the 1960s and 1970s, large national chains bought out smaller independents and regional chains, consolidating their hold on the market [136]. The large retailers engaged in “price wars,” forcing the closure of smaller-scale markets that could not compete with the buying power of the national chains. The petition cited the problem of increasing concentration in local markets during the 1970s, which allowed prices to be higher in the absence of true competition. Many low-income consumers found themselves reliant on the national chains, which had “undercut” and out-competed their local grocer. The petition concluded that, “No sooner had this dependence been forged when the supermarket chains themselves began abandoning the

urban communities to concentrate on their relatively more profitable suburban stores” [136].

In 1988 the Select Committee on Hunger published a report, “Obtaining Food: Shopping Constraints of the Poor,” which claimed to be the first time since Congressman Rosenthal’s 1968 Hearing on the Consumer Problems of the Poor that the House of Representatives studied the barriers to food purchasing by low-income consumers [55]. They cited the various explanations given by the supermarket industry for their migration to the suburbs: “high insurance rates, employment and security problems, and outmoded and understocked inner-city stores – conditions which keep profits low.” The suburbs, on the other hand, provided more favorable conditions for supermarket operations. The Obtaining Food report placed the period of “supermarket migration” during the late 1970s and early 1980s [55].

The report by a community-based organization, titled, “The Poor Pay More: Food Shopping in Hartford” provided similar explanations for the supermarket exodus, which they called a local and national phenomenon of the “previous fifteen years” [50]. In Hartford alone, eleven of thirteen supermarkets had closed their doors between 1968 and 1984, when the report was published. The report offered two primary explanations for why supermarkets chains closed their urban locations. First, the costs of operating in the inner city were higher and the profits lower as compared with their suburban counterparts. And second, large vertically integrated chains preferred to operate one “type” of store that had similar requirements for the warehouse and its distribution channels. The Hartford report accentuated the differences between large suburban outlets and the small, outdated urban stores in poor repair. In such small stores, less floor space could be

devoted to the non-food items with higher profit margins that increased the profitability of larger suburban stores. As the industry consolidated and developed more sophisticated distribution systems for large stores or warehouse stores, chains found it “difficult or undesirable to continue accommodating smaller, more traditional supermarkets” [50].

The Public Advocates petition makes a similar point. While the supermarkets explained to the public that their inner city stores were too costly to operate, the petition rejected the industry’s claim and provided a counter-explanation: “High costs and low sales volume are not the only causes for the abandonment of the inner cities. Corporate planners have simply decided that it is more profitable and convenient to operate large food stores elsewhere.” Rather than invest in designing modern facilities in the inner city, it was more convenient to close their outdated urban operations and develop a new model that facilitated their suburban growth [136].

Whatever the causes, community-based organizations and anti-hunger advocates were clear about the consequences: inner city residents were experiencing a food emergency that demanded a proportionate response from the government. Public Advocates painted a dire picture to their audience, writing: “To an outside observer, the lack of food stores may not present the urgency of war time, but to the inner city resident, inadequate food availability is a very real threat to existence” [136]. During the 1984 Hearing of the Select Committee on Hunger, doctors gave testimony about the prevalence of diet-related chronic diseases among adults and the multiple problems that poorly nourished children faced [104]. They spoke of the consequences for infants and children when a mother’s diet was inadequate during pregnancy. A Catholic priest spoke about the increasing demands for their meal service program among the elderly, families in distress,

immigrants and other vulnerable groups. He acknowledged to the Committee that charity was not a long-term solution: “We realize this is an emergency, we realize this is taking care of the symptoms of the problem. We want to get to the causes, what is causing this problem. We realize, too, that if a person is hungry, we can't tell him to wait until we find out the causes and solve them” [104].

Many factors compounded the challenges for poor families to acquire adequate food. The lack of reliable transportation was among the most commonly cited barrier. The Public Advocates petition argued how the lack of local competitive markets forced low-income residents to “choose their evils” between paying the higher prices for poorer quality at neighborhood stores, or deploying costly and time-consuming strategies to shop elsewhere. The authors explained: “Some travel by expensive and inconvenient public transportation to still existing chains on the fringes of their neighborhoods. For the handicapped, elderly and parents with young children this alternative poses insurmountable difficulties and dangers” [136]. The 1988 Congressional report, *Obtaining Food*, identified the decision about whether to travel to access more affordable groceries the single most important decision a low-income food shopper must make. A 1980 USDA study on food stamp usage²⁸, referenced by the *Obtaining Food* report, found that only 22 percent of food stamp recipients drove their own car to the store, compared with 95 percent on non-food stamp recipients [55].

Transportation options were expensive, and increasingly so as energy costs increased during the decade. Gasoline was more expensive for those who had cars, or those who hired “gypsy cabs” – the informal taxi services that operated in many inner

²⁸ Nelson, Paul E., and Zellner, James A., "Store Selection By Food Stamp Households," *National Food Review*, Summer 1980, p. 24.

cities [104]. Higher energy costs also meant more expensive utility bills, and therefore less money remained to use on either groceries or transportation costs. Public transportation was often time consuming, and an inefficient mode of travel, as it might take more than one bus route to access a supermarket. Furthermore, traveling home with bags of groceries or a small grocery cart was difficult and often impractical. Despite all these difficulties, the 1980 USDA study found that three quarters of food stamp redemptions occurred at supermarkets nationwide [55].

For many residents, the barriers to access supermarkets in fringe urban areas or the suburbs were too high to scale, and so they were captive to the high cost, low quality food stores operating in their neighborhoods. Attorney Lois Salisbury, the spokeswoman for Public Advocates, gave testimony at the 1984 Select Committee on Hunger Hearing about how pregnant women and the elderly often had little fresh produce or meats in their diets, since it wasn't available the small corner stores [104]. The corner markets could not be considered an adequate substitute for major food purchases, explained the Public Advocates petition, because they were "heavily stocked with alcoholic beverages and snack items rather than nutritious foods." If the stores did have fresh and perishable items, the quality tended to be low and the cost high [104].

There were many calls throughout the hunger-related Congressional hearings of the 1980s for increased nutrition education for low-income families. Physician and former president of the American Public Health Association, Victor Sidel, testified before the Hearing on the Hunger Relief Act of 1986 that diets were poor because low-income people did not have adequate federal assistance to purchase a wholesome diet, not because they were bad shoppers [49]. He cited evidence (that had been raised in hearings

before) indicating that food stamp shoppers bought more nutrition per dollar than other consumers. And yet USDA data demonstrated that only 12 percent of people living on a food budget at the level of the Thrifty Food Plan had proper nutritional intakes. Dr. Sidel cautioned against an incorrect interpretation of that statistic, explaining “This is an area in which it is very easy to blame the victim; to point to the supposed inability of poor people to shop wisely, to their ignorance of nutrition or weak resistance to the blandishments of junk food advertisers. Such stereotypes are incorrect” [49]. Poor households simply did not have the funds to acquire adequate nutrition; a problem compounded by the inaccessibility of supermarkets located at far distances and unreliable transportation. Dr. Sidel leveled blame at a restrictive federal government, rather than the behavior of poor households, concluding: “It is a policy at work that sets benefit levels too low to meet the real needs of American people” [49].

The hunger and food access debates largely focused on the constraints for low-income consumers in general. Yet, studies from the 1980s demonstrated that racial composition of a neighborhood was a more powerful predictor of where supermarkets located than area income level. A 1983 study from Cornell University using retail data from several New York counties and New York City concluded that: “Inferior food shopping is not related to poverty per se; poor neighborhoods offer better food shopping if they do not have large proportions of black or elderly consumers.” The neighborhoods with the best shopping availability had “large stores, low crime rates and young, white residents” [47]. In 1988, the Obtaining Food report echoed these findings when they reported that neighborhoods with black or elderly residents had the most restricted access to food stores with “reasonable prices” [55]. In fact, in the 1980s some black

neighborhoods were seeing investment by the supermarket industry, sometimes with government support. But this investment may have been to capitalize on the slow influx of white, affluent households occurring near some predominantly black and low-income urban areas.

Gentrification and Supermarket Development in “Under-stored” Areas

Stories began appearing in the grocery trade publications as early as the mid-1980s that urban redevelopment of old downtowns was creating a new opportunity to invest in urban supermarkets – a trend that would only accelerate by the early 1990s. The trade publication accounts were cautiously optimistic about the prospects of the inner city; while acknowledging the challenges, they argued that the potential for profits in the city had been undervalued and ignored. Redevelopment efforts by local governments and quasi-governmental agencies (such as community development corporations) went hand in hand with the return of affluent, mostly white households to urban downtowns. Yet these households were often moving into neighborhoods without a large, high quality supermarket. By 1985 in Baltimore *Progressive Grocer* reported that, “The need for a supermarket in the community was so severe that it was slowing the redevelopment of the area” [54].

The return to the city seems to have been spurred by the gentrification of these aging downtowns. The *Progressive Grocer* article, “Urban Revival: New Life for City Supers” highlighted the experience of the Stiglitz family in Philadelphia – Gary Stiglitz opened a supermarket in 1980 across the street from the original location of his grandfather’s supermarket, which had opened 50 years prior [54]. That store, since closed,

had served the neighborhood when it was primarily working class and white. In the intervening years, the neighborhood had become primarily poor and black. Demographic change was occurring yet again as a nearby neighborhood began to “gentrify” and as the article described, “push into what had become a ghetto.” The Stiglitz family identified this as a good time to reinvest in the neighborhood, as owner Gary Stiglitz expressed to *Progressive Grocer*: “Girard Avenue used to be a thriving commercial street and we felt that it had the potential to once again become a hub of commerce in this community. We knew that the neighborhood would not get any worse, and thought it would improve” [54].

The calculation of the Stiglitz family was not unique – downtowns were beginning to appear like more attractive investment opportunities across the supermarket industry. In 1984, the trade publication *Supermarketing* reported on this trend, commenting: “Having all but despaired of finding potential areas in which to expand in America's saturated suburbs, major US supermarket chains are returning to the cities they abandoned three decades ago” [51]. By returning to the city, the focus was not on high-poverty areas most in need of low-cost, high quality groceries. Rather the supermarkets were looking to what *Supermarketing* referred to as “vast so-called transitional areas populated by mixtures of blue-collar, white-collar, and low-income workers and their families” [51]. These areas had been considered “to offer too small a profit potential to warrant construction of modern supermarkets” compared to the opportunities in the wealthier suburbs. It was from these areas which *Supermarketing* explained supermarkets had closed their “their small, obsolete, pre-World War II supermarkets” when they migrated away from the city [51]. And it was these areas that offered the potential for

attractive profits; industry studies about the market potential of such areas “convinced major chains that they have ignored vast sources of sales and profits” [51].

The operators of newly opened urban supermarkets discussed the strategies they used to appeal to their diverse customer base – the lower income families in the surrounding neighborhoods as well as the young professionals living and working in redeveloped downtowns. The Stiglitz family focused on providing a secure store environment to attract the more affluent customers into what they explained “some view as a dangerous area” – they employed store security guards, hired local youth to paint a mural on their walls to discourage graffiti, and allowed a hot-dog vendor to operate in the parking lot to keep eyes on the street [54]. Other owners explained how they adjusted their merchandising (the mix of products within a store) to appeal to higher income clientele – including offering gourmet international foods and an extensive deli with prepared foods. *Progressive Grocer* lauded merchants who were aware of the demographic changes that were occurring and the opportunity it presented when, “the meat and potatoes people are being replaced by those who prefer Brie cheese and veal scaloppini” [54].

Many of these new supermarkets were independent grocers, like Santoni’s in Baltimore. The independents were seen to have an advantage in returning to the inner city since they could be more aware of and responsive to neighborhood needs. Residents in Baltimore’s Fells Point neighborhood established a community-based organization to develop a supermarket after no chain store expressed any interest in their request for a local supermarket. The non-profit group raised capital to build the market, and leased it to a local independent supermarket operator, the Santoni family. They actively sought to

merchandise to the tastes and price points of both the affluent and the poor and admonished their employees to “treat all customers the same, whether they pay with food stamps or \$100 bills” [54]. In Hartford, where the two remaining supermarkets were independents, the authors of the report suggested that while independents often charged higher prices than the chains, they had one major advantage. They were considered more committed to their local community. The report concluded, “That kind of local commitment will probably never be found in national chains” [50].

Some reports from the grocery trade publications suggested that major chains faced barriers to building new supermarkets in these newly attractive urban areas. A perennial barrier was land acquisition – the large supermarket chains, unlike more flexible independents, were looking for sites larger than 20,000 square feet to build markets that were comparable to their suburban models [54]. Buying enough land usually meant dealing with many sellers. According to representatives from the supermarket industry, this provided an opening for opportunistic actors to insert themselves in the development process to advance their own interests. A site-selection official from a major chain explained to *Supermarketing* how chains needed to operate to get into the urban market: “The key to building new markets in understored areas and profiting from such stores is literally to sneak into the area in the middle of the night, in a sense, and buy up the land before anyone knows who is doing the buying, then ramming through the various councils the applications needed to excavate and build before all the little neighborhood nitpickers find out what's happening and try to stick their greedy little hands into the pie for a share of profit” [51]. Supermarket chains eager to invest in New York City locations, like King Kullen, Waldbaum, Pathmark, and Foodtown met with

resistance from local politicians who were hearing from the independent merchants in their districts that such large stores would harm their businesses [51]. Additionally, as a supermarket industry representative explained to the 1984 Select Committee on Hunger, landlords who owned large retail spaces did not consider supermarkets attractive renters, since markets were no longer highest and best use [104].

Rise of Community-Based Solutions for Urban Food Problems

Community-based groups waited neither for the industry to find their neighborhoods sufficiently attractive, nor for the federal government to intervene with adequate food assistance to improve their access to high-quality food. Throughout the 1980s community groups and coalitions of civic organizations, businesses, and local lawmakers worked towards a variety of community-based solutions to the problems of the inner city food system. Such a burgeoning response from local groups may have been a reaction to the withdrawal in commitments to far reaching anti-poverty programs from the federal government. The final recommendations of the Presidential Task Force on Hunger in 1984 reflected the Administration's priorities and view about the role of government – the report suggested addressing hunger by allowing states to develop their own food assistance programs, improving targeting of existing programs, encouraging private sector efforts, and improving the measurement of hunger and nutritional status [94].

The solutions do not suggest the sense of urgency that was expressed in the 1960s, or the scale of the emergency as described by anti-hunger advocates during the Congressional hearings throughout the decade. Take, for example, the title of the Public

Advocates petition to the Carter Administration: “Immediate Executive Action to Alleviate the Nationwide Inner City Food Crisis.” The crisis was immanent, and federal action was required immediately [136]. The Mayor of San Francisco established a local Task Force on Food and Hunger, comprised of public officials and representatives from various local hunger and poverty non-profits, “because of the clear, undeniable and authoritative evidence of a food crisis both nationally and locally” [104].

Not unlike the discourse of the previous decade, advocates in the 1980s recognized that the problems were complex and the solutions unclear. The Obtaining Food report ended on an ambivalent note [55]. The scope of the problem was clear; hunger could not be solved if poor people could not access quality food at reasonable prices. And yet the government study concluded that “equal access to food at fair and competitive prices, and free market enterprise, are often opposing forces.” What did this tension mean for possible solutions? According to the report, “Some experts promote greater government intervention in securing equality in the market place for the poor; others recommend that the government have a limited, if any, role in intervening in this market industry” [55].

The final recommendations of the report erred on the side of federal support for local projects. Since each community was “unique,” designs should be responsive to community needs. The final four recommendations of the Obtaining Food report included: a National Blue Ribbon study to research strategies to increase the quality of food in low-income areas through the market system, tax breaks from state and local governments to supermarkets locating in low-income neighborhoods, federal incentives

to support local food access initiatives, and federal support for consumer education programs [55].

At the state and local level, community-based groups were already partnering with lawmakers and businesses in creating hunger and food access task forces and coalitions to comprehensively address the problems of the local food system. In California, the governor established an Inner City Food Task Force in 1980 in response to the petition of fourteen community groups from throughout the state [104]. Other examples included the Maryland Food Committee, the Philadelphia Food and Agriculture Task Force, and the San Francisco Task Force on Food and Hunger coalitions brought together to develop local solutions for the problems of hunger and inadequate food access. In addition to attracting and retaining full service supermarkets to low-income areas, these community-based groups promoted buying clubs, co-operatively owned food stores, urban agriculture and community gardens, as well as expanded farmers markets [104].

Community-based groups sought government support for these ventures, across levels of government, while also emphasizing the need for community control and self-help. Public Advocates, representing a coalition of national anti-hunger and anti-poverty community groups, sought first for low-income areas to be identified as “food crisis zones” by the federal government [136]. Doing so would designate the inner city as an emergency that required a federal response and federal responsibility. The stated purpose of the petition was to alert the president to “a food crisis as devastating in its impact as any natural disaster, yet so unnatural in form that, without caring eyes, it can be overlooked.” And more importantly, they argued, “Unlike a natural catastrophe, however, this emergency was humanly created and can be humanly solved.” The petition included

examples from its coalition members of existing programs and opportunities that awaited “governmental leadership, resources and coordination,” as well as the government programs that they argued had failed or faltered because of “sparse resources or where government has failed to take any initiative whatsoever, despite its clear mandate to do so.” The petition articulates a responsibility of government to provide enough resources both so that federal programs could be effective and also to support the grassroots work of local initiatives [136].

Throughout the discussion of solutions by community groups is the need for solutions that, in the words of the Public Advocates petition, “contain the seeds for self-sufficiency” [136]. What this meant was that long-term solutions would have to be transformative and wealth building. One such solution, also discussed in previous eras, was the joint venture. Community involvement and investment in the joint venture would help protect against corporate investment that was either not tailored towards community needs, or as Public Advocates feared, would depart once communities were “milked dry” [136]. The Community Nutrition Institute described both the appeal and the challenge of joint ventures in a bulletin to its membership in 1981. Joint ventures were often built in response to the closing of an existing supermarket – community groups raised funds to purchase the building, which they sought to lease to a new supermarket [45]. Other joint ventures were built as part of a larger redevelopment project, like the well-known Pathmark in Brooklyn, built in the 1960s as a component of the Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation [92].

According to CNI, the contribution of the community group is also to engage the loyalty and trust of local residents. With community buy-in, CNI explained that some of

the variables that lead to higher inner city operating costs might be contained. In particular, community groups were expected to help reduce the crime and vandalism that sometimes occurred in and near inner city stores, and which discouraged investment by the supermarket industry. In the bulletin, CNI warned that while the joint venture was increasing in popularity, it also suffered from “a greater rate of chronic problems and failure” [45]. In a 1982 guide about market alternatives for solving the problems of poor inner city food access, CNI struck a much more positive chord, writing: “The joint venture supermarket has achieved a remarkable amount of success in combatting inner city food problems precisely because it is based on getting community groups and government agencies involved; it works because all the parties who suffer from inadequate access to food in the inner city become part of the effort to solve the problem” [46].

In the absence of large supermarkets and the difficulty in attracting them to inner city areas, many community groups throughout the country embraced market alternatives, including urban agriculture, farmers markets, buying clubs and cooperative grocery stores. The Public Advocates petition concluded that many approaches would be needed to solve the complex problems of inner city food access, and that, “In most cases, this will mean different alternative operating simultaneously” [136]. Though these market alternatives promote self-reliance, they also stood to benefit from federal and local government support, particularly through financing or technical assistance. Yet the 1980s was an era of budget cuts and a diminishing sense of the responsibility of the federal government to direct anti-poverty and anti-hunger programs [104].

The CNI manual, “Food Marketing Alternatives for the Inner City”, listed the various government grants and agencies that community groups could look to for support in developing local solutions to the problems of inadequate food access [46]. It included a caveat to consumer groups that taking these approaches would be difficult in the current economic climate and the dearth of available investment capital. But another major challenge was the uncertainty about the federal commitment to adequately fund these agencies or support the various grants. They warned their readers, “Unfortunately, at the time of this printing much uncertainty remained as to the future of many of the funding and technical assistance programs which have been available for food access improvement efforts. This, of course, is due to the extensive funding reductions made for these agencies and organizations during the first year of the Reagan Administration, and to the prospect of even greater reductions in future years. For this reason some (hopefully just a few) of these programs included in this manual may, inevitably, not be available when consumer groups call” [46].

Supermarkets in the 1980s: Summary and Conclusions

The Presidential Task Force on Hunger would not substantiate the allegations of widespread hunger in America, citing lack of sufficient data to measure the problem [94]. In the face of these unknowns, the report concluded: “Much of the discussion generated by this issue concerns the question of how we, as a nation, set about to deal with the problem of the needy in our midst” [94]. This may be the central question for the discourse of the 1980s – and depending on political ideology and assumptions about reality, its answers would widely diverge. The federal government, represented by the

Reagan administration, constructed not just the behavior of poor people, but also programs to assist the poor as creating and perpetuating the problems (and “pathologies”) of poverty. Unlike the discourse of the 1960s, there is no acknowledgment of the structural causes of poverty and its racialized dimensions. There is no Kerner Report implicating the ghetto as a product of white supremacy.

On the other hand, community-based groups both lobbied the federal government to take responsibility for adequately funding social programs to assist the poor and lobbied for funding for their locally developed solutions. Much of the effort went to retaining or building large supermarkets – particularly the independents, which may have been more amenable to joint ventures and had more of a stake in the community. Despite the higher prices associated with independents over chains, their adaptability may have rendered them more attractive to community groups. Community-based organizations and coalitions around the country also devoted considerable energy to developing market alternatives, and sought financing and technical support from the state to help launch these projects. These responses ultimately reflect the expanded scope of the problem as identified by advocates for low-income communities.

Consider the difference between describing neighborhoods without adequate food access as either “understored,” as did the supermarket industry, or “food crisis zones,” suggested by Public Advocates. These terms are the precursors to describing neighborhoods as “underserved” or “food deserts.” The latter terms are clearly meant to motivate concern and action, while the prior are passive descriptors; who or what is doing the understoring or underserving is nowhere evident. Referring to such areas as “food crisis zones,” on the other hand, makes a statement about the urgency and scope of the

problem. These were places with multiple, interrelated inequalities, where vulnerable people were in distress. This definition levels blame - as the Public Advocate petition argued, the problem was humanly made and could be humanly solved. In this construction, the scope is wide, the problems are complex, and thus solutions must be as well. The problem was not just a lack of supermarkets; it was a lack of community control over the food system and opportunities for wealth building. Bringing supermarkets into poor neighborhoods would not address the problems of self-reliance and wealth generation that the market alternatives might offer.

During the mid-1980s as some downtowns gentrified, the supermarket industry began to consider urban areas the next frontier for supermarket development. This trend would only accelerate in the coming decade as immigration and redevelopment repopulated urban centers. Studies demonstrated that the market potential of the inner city had been vastly overlooked, and profits could in fact be made. In the coming decade, while community organizations continued their work to comprehensively address the inner city food system, and the federal government continued its retreat from the welfare state, the supermarket industry positioned itself into an important role in both urban redevelopment and meeting the food and nutritional needs of America's urban poor.

4-7 The 1990s: Supermarkets and the New Urban Frontier

Overview

What may be most distinctive about the urban supermarket discourse of the 1990s is what it shared with previous eras, rather than what was new. The urban poor

continued to pay more – those with the least ability to pay shopped in food stores with the highest prices. Few large, modern supermarkets serviced inner city neighborhoods. Existing stores tended to be small, poorly maintained, and stocked with low quality perishable foods and generic canned and boxed goods. Consumer and anti-poverty advocates questioned how efficient food stamps could be when many of its recipients were captive to neighborhoods with such high-priced and low quality food retail options. There was evidence that supermarkets avoided predominantly black neighborhoods, regardless of the purchasing power of the community. The Select Committee on Hunger in the House of Representatives devoted an entire hearing to the problems of supermarket access by the inner city, predominantly minority poor.

And also like the 1960s, riots in the streets of Los Angeles and civil disorder in other cities focused government attention on the unequal conditions of black and Hispanic residents of America's inner cities [66]. Supermarkets were once again burned and looted. Yet these conditions existed in a new political context, one that since at least the 1980s favored private enterprise, rather than government protection and assistance, as an essential agent for improving the health and quality of life of vulnerable citizens. The question for public policy became how government could best partner with "community" and business interests to create jobs, opportunities for economic growth, and more equitable and healthy living environments.

In response, the supermarket industry positioned itself as a key partner in the revitalization of American cities and the health of its residents. The interests of government and the interests of industry were aligned; supermarket development could simultaneously spur economic development more generally, as well as meet a basic and

unmet human need – access to quality food at reasonable prices for the urban poor. The 1990s was an era of optimistic urban redevelopment, which presented the grocery industry with an opportunity to enter a virtually untapped inner city market. Affluent households were moving back to the city, and government at its various levels allocated special financing options and tax abatements to incentivize downtown redevelopment. Market studies demonstrated that supermarkets could be profitable serving minority consumers. At the beginning of the 1990s, the supermarket industry once again explicitly debated whether the inner city and its largely minority residents were “worth” the effort of investment and store development. This time around, however, the answer seemed to be an enthusiastic “yes.”

Financing credit for these urban supermarket endeavors became newly available through both public and private sources. The role of the federal, state, and local governments became to remove barriers to supermarket development, and to create tax and financing incentives to attract investment. Massive investment also became available through Community Development Corporations, which often received its seed funding from corporations and financial institutions, rather than community-based organizations. In return for this support, the supermarket industry vowed to be a positive community institution - new large, modern supermarkets would provide employment to area residents, offer job training programs, community meeting locations, check-cashing services, and support for local organizations and youth programs. In short, the supermarket industry, which had been villainized in the past for either avoiding the inner city entirely or for providing sub-par services there, was now poised to be the hero of the story. Few voiced dissent.

The Urban Grocery Gap: Supermarket Scarcity in the Inner City

By the early 1990s the inner city was widely considered to be a disordered and “beleaguered” place [56]. Compounding the more visible problems of crime, unemployment, and homelessness, central city residents had few places to shop that offered high quality food at reasonable prices. The Los Angeles riots in April of 1992 brought renewed public attention to the lack of decent markets available to the poor, predominantly black and Latino residents in South Central Los Angeles, and indeed in central cities around the nation [60, 66, 113] . Compared to other higher profile issues affecting the daily lives of inner city residents, few decent places to shop for food might not have seemed like a pressing public concern. Yet, throughout the 1990s an incredible amount of activity, both public and private, occurred to bring supermarkets to cities and to use supermarket development as a significant component in an overall strategy to “rebuild” downtowns and “revitalize” urban America. In the fall of 1992, the House Select Committee on Hunger and Nutrition devoted an entire hearing to the “Grocery Gap” – the lack of large, efficient, reasonably priced grocery stores available to low-income and minority populations in urban areas. Representative Jim Moran commended the purpose of the Hearing, referring to it as the “type of thing that you would not read about on the front page of the newspaper” and thus which required leadership to vault the issue to public attention [67].

It is possible that the problem increased in political visibility because the interests of most parties to the policy discourse aligned – the supermarket industry was interested in investing in urban locations to generate profit; local community-based groups had been

hard at work since the previous decade coaxing chain supermarkets to develop in their communities; and supermarket development was an attractive policy option to lawmakers in a political climate friendly to private market solutions. Surely, the conditions of food shopping in the inner city were not new. As before, community leaders and non-profit advocacy groups testified at the Grocery Gap hearing about the challenges for low-income households to access an adequate and high quality food supply [67].

Representative Tony Hall, Chairman of the Grocery Gap hearing, opened the proceedings by describing the “harsh marketplace inequities” faced by inner city residents: chain supermarkets were scarce, existing stores were small, outmoded, and sold inferior quality goods at high prices [67].

Local and national studies documented these trends. In a 1991 price comparison study, the New York City Department of Consumer Affairs found that shoppers in poor neighborhoods of NYC were paying 8.8% higher for groceries compared with shoppers in middle class areas, which constituted about \$350 more in annual food costs per household [56]. Even without convenience stores in the analysis, food costs were 5.2% higher in low-income area supermarkets compared with those in middle-class areas. The Consumer Affairs report (titled “The Poor Pay More, For Less” in homage to David Caplovitz’s seminal work) concluded that, “The very status of being poor is making poor people even poorer” [56].

A 1991 study on national food price differences, “Do the Poor Still Pay More? Food Price Variations in Large Metropolitan Areas,” reported similar trends. Included as testimony in the Grocery Gap hearing, the article documented the higher prices found in central cities compared to suburbs, which persisted even when the analysis was restricted

to chain supermarkets [67]. The authors, James MacDonald and Paul Nelson, concluded: “Small, high-cost stores clustered, and survived according to our analysis, in older, poorer, less mobile neighborhoods that were not suited to -volume supermarkets.” Poor black households were most likely to be served by such stores, since they were also clustered in central city areas, whereas poor white households were significantly more dispersed throughout the metropolitan area. Using census data from 1982, the study reported that 78% of poor blacks lived in central cities and 58% percent lived in high poverty areas, whereas 50% of poor whites lived in central cities and only 18% of poor whites lived in high-poverty areas [67]. In 1995, a companion study by the food access advocacy group Public Voice for Food and Health Policy found that supermarket access was particularly low in areas with the highest rates of public assistance; there was 67% less supermarket square-footage in zip codes with the most families on public assistance compared with zip codes with the fewest families on public assistance [82].

To access quality food outside the neighborhood, shoppers relied on taxis or buses, adding additional costs and burdens to the chore of acquiring groceries for the household. Hartford food justice advocate Mark Winne testified that such inadequate access to reasonably priced groceries was an “additional penalty” for those experiencing hunger and poverty [67]. A non-profit food access advocacy group in New York City, the Community Food Resource Center (CFRC), estimated that shoppers reliant on taxis or buses for food shopping spent an additional \$400 to \$1,000 annually on transportation costs. In response, community groups devised both free and low-cost transportation programs, typically buses or shuttles, for low-income and elderly residents to access quality supermarkets in other areas [67].

Poor neighborhoods typically had few large markets and offered poor quality food and services within existing markets. The Consumer Affairs study analyzed supermarkets per person across poor and middle-income zip codes in New York City, finding consistently fewer supermarkets in low-income areas that served large populations [56]. For example, in Manhattan's well-to-do Upper East Side there was one supermarket per 6,000 residents, in the similarly affluent Upper West Side the figure was about one per 7,000 residents. Compare the ratios to nearby Central Harlem, a historically black and lower-income district, where there were two supermarkets in a zip code of 25,000 people (averaging one supermarket per 12,500 residents). In a low-income, ethnically diverse zip code covering East Williamsburg and parts of Bedford-Stuyvesant in Brooklyn, there was only one supermarket for its 63,000 residents. The same study found that supermarkets in poor neighborhoods were dirtier and more likely to be cited for sanitary violations than supermarkets in higher income neighborhoods. They also tended to be smaller voluntary co-operatives (independents operating under the same banner) rather than large regional chains [56].

Witnesses representing organizations from around the country testified to the same effect at the Grocery Gap hearing in 1992 [67]. Large stores with reasonable prices were few and the quality of the products offered in existing stores was clearly inferior – particularly among the meats and fresh produce. In a Congressional Research Report, “Food Marketing in the Inner City: Trends and Options” submitted as testimony to the hearing, the author says both “marketing experts and activists” agreed that the quality of fresh and perishable items in low-income area grocery stores was poor, and the selection limited [61, 67]. But the inferior quality of goods was not restricted to the small mom-

and-pop shops that dotted the inner city landscape. Supermarkets, both independents and chains, were accused of selling poor quality items and an abundance of junk food in poor areas [67].

The conditions were reminiscent of the discourse in the late 1960s, when supermarkets were accused of purposely selling inferior products in their central city locations. Acknowledging this history, Representative Payne lamented the inadequacy of quality food availability in the inner city, reminding his audience, “we know it was practice many years ago where after bread was a day or two old, they would send it to the center city; milk, the same way; meat, the same way. You would never get a fresh head of lettuce. It was all frail when it came down to the supermarkets, and these were national chains, you know, when they were in the city” [67].

Representative Albert Bustamante contended that in his experience, these conditions are exactly the case at present [67]. Probing the opinion of expert witness and marketing academic Dr. Ronald Cotterill, Rep. Bustamante argued that poor areas received lesser quality foods, often nearing their expiration date. Dr. Cotterill explained that might be a function of a less efficient distribution system among smaller stores. The representative replied, “Well, it is a priority that they place on the poor versus the other areas” [67]. Echoing the sentiment that the poor in-store conditions reflected a poor perception of low-income shoppers by the supermarket industry, the NYC Consumer Affairs study concluded that, “It contributes to the feeling of low-income residents that they are second class citizens when their nearest food stores are small and shabby, with dirty shelves of overage canned goods and broken refrigerator cases with suspect chicken” [56]. At the Grocery Gap hearing, advocate Mark Winne explained the stakes of the

problem: “When quality is low and cost high, low income shoppers will be placed at risk of poor nutrition and hunger” [67].

Similar to prior iterations of the urban supermarket policy discourse, anti-hunger and anti-poverty advocates argued that vulnerable households on federal assistance programs could not receive their full benefits while prices were so high and quality so poor in their neighborhood grocery stores. In 1993, a Congressional hearing on food stamp reform provided a forum for lawmakers, advocates, and industry representatives to discuss how food store availability affected the ability of poor households to acquire sufficient food and a nutritious diet [107]. The Hearing, “Ensure Adequate Access to Retail Food Stores Recipients of Food Stamps and to Maintain the Integrity of the Food Stamp Program,” concerned a bill that would modify the eligibility criteria for retail foods to participate in the Food Stamp program, such that convenience stores could participate. Ellen Vollinger of the Food Research Action Center, a non-profit food access organization, testified in support of the bill, explaining, “The current hunger crisis underscores the critical need to maximize the ability of the Food Stamp Program to serve poor families” [107].

Since poor areas, both rural and urban, lacked easy access to large, efficient supermarkets, convenience stores were promoted as an important, if imperfect, source for poor households to purchase groceries. The purpose of the bill under debate was to increase opportunities for food stamp participants to shop for food. Given the higher prices and lesser quality of food in small stores, several lawmakers questioned whether that would be an appropriate solution. Unsurprisingly, representatives from the convenience store industry spoke in strong favor of the bill and reassured the Committee

that prices were not higher in their stores for staples like milk and bread. A representative from the National Association of Convenience Stores affirmed his commitment as a taxpayer, “and a very conservative one at that,” to see that federal food assistance benefits would not go to waste [107].

Several Congressmen on the Committee appeared unsatisfied by the claims of the industry that prices were equitable, and pressed witnesses on the affects of the program on the efficiency of the Food Stamp program. Ellen Hass, formerly of the Community Nutrition Institute, testified in favor of the bill in her new role as Assistant Secretary for Food and Consumer Services at the USDA. She dismissed questions about price differentials, not as unimportant, but as irrelevant to the purpose of the bill before them. She explained, “Here we are not trying to deal with that problem of the difference in price. We are trying to make sure we have access to food and not to limit it.” She framed it as an opportunity to “reinvent” the Food Stamp program around a mission of access and nutrition [107].

Consumer education was once again put forth as an important component of the solution [107]. Better nutrition education could help Food Stamp participants spend their dollars judiciously and access a healthy diet with their benefits, regardless of where they shopped. Congressman Daniel Glickman, future Secretary of Agriculture, defended the buying habits of the poor, explaining, “I just think we ought to clear for the record. Studies clearly show that food stamp recipients are as or more prudent with their food stamp dollars than non-food stamp people are in spending their dollars. I mean, the fact is, I am not on food stamps and I buy a lot of junk, tremendous amount of junk. The size of my belly is somewhat related to what I buy at these stores, and the fact is that people who

are on a much more limited sources of income buy much more carefully in terms of those staples of food because they don't have the luxury.” Rep. Glickman, in his remarks, was shifting focus to the problems of limited access among poor people, rather than problems of poor shoppers making uninformed decisions [107].

Partnering for Development: Supermarkets, Community Development Corporations, and Public Policy

There was general consensus throughout the 1990s across community groups, concerned policymakers, and representatives of the supermarket industry that supermarket development was good for the city and deserving of public policy attention. The explanations for why supermarkets were not already operating in the inner city may have differed across groups, but the need to attract new development was uncontroversial and widely agreed upon. For example, in 1991 the United States Conference of Mayors passed a resolution to support, “policies that would end the 'redlining' of urban America by the national supermarket industry” [63]. The Food Marketing Institute, the primary lobby group for the supermarket industry, dismissed the phrasing of the Conference of Mayors resolution, while affirming the mutual interests and goals of developing more urban supermarkets and welcoming public policies that would aid such development [63]. *Progressive Grocer* reported FMI’s refutation of the Conference of Mayor’s framing of the issue, quoting FMI spokeswoman Karen Brown as saying: “Redlining is a great rhetorical statement to make. We just don't see any evidence to support that.” The trade magazine then highlighted the efforts of FMI to facilitate new supermarket development in the nation’s cities. In 1992, the industry group established the Urban Initiatives Task

Force; its mission was to “foster the revitalization of communities through private-public partnerships,” to identify and promote model community-support programs, including programs for youth-at-risk, and to motivate its membership to participate in such programs [63].

The FMI was a central actor in bringing together public and private interests around urban supermarket development. The National League of Cities, a lobby organization representing the interests of local lawmakers in American cities and towns, adopted the same priorities as the Urban Initiatives Task Force after a meeting organized by FMI [73]. The purpose of the meeting, which included a mayor, five city council members, and eight supermarket industry executives, was “to discuss the issues facing retailers and cities, foster ideas for collaboration between city governments and supermarket operators, and identify specific initiatives that could be successfully developed and/or duplicated.” According to the chairman of the Urban Initiatives Task Force, Allen Bildner, “A bonding occurred, together with a high level of trust and communication among the participants.” A publication of FMI, its monthly “Issues Bulletin,” covered the 1993 meeting and highlighted the importance of collaboration between the industry and public officials [73]. It quoted FMI board member, supermarket executive (and Connecticut State senator) Thirman Milner as saying, “The beauty of the political-retail partnership is that most of the policymakers in government are on the same side of the issues as retailers. You just have to be active in the issues that affect your business” [73].

Another major advocate for urban supermarket development was The Retail Initiative (TRI), a program created by the Local Initiatives Support Coalition (LISC), the

“nation’s largest financial community development intermediary” [74]. Established as a financing institution for urban housing and economic development, LISC originally had a minimal role in financing supermarket projects in the 1980s. They offered testimony for the 1986 Hunger Relief Act that “from time to time community groups, distressed by the absence or impending departure of food markets from their neighborhoods (or for local development reasons) have sought LISC and other assistance because community sponsored food/supermarkets are often the anchors needed for revitalizing some neighborhoods” [49]. In 1993, as urban supermarkets featured prominently in urban redevelopment schemes, LISC launched TRI to focus specifically on facilitating relationships between supermarket operators and local community development corporations. TRI controlled a \$24 million fund, derived mostly from large corporations and investment firms, including Prudential, Bank of America, GE Capital, and JP Morgan [115]. On its Board of Directors sat Allen Bildner of FMI’s Urban Initiatives Task Force and Monsignor William J. Linder, a key witness at the Grocery Gap hearing.

The supermarket industry positioned itself as a key component of urban revitalization; supermarkets, executives and developers argued, would serve as anchor institutions, attracting other commercial development and activity. The chief retail economist for PricewaterhouseCoopers told *Progressive Grocer* in 1999 that retail development was “the keystone aspect of bringing economic development back to inner-cities” [129]. Following the LA riots, a local supermarket chain, Vons, made a high-profile commitment to building ten to twelve new modern supermarkets in “underserved” neighborhoods of LA as part of the rebuilding effort, positioning themselves as part of the solution of complicated urban problems [113]. In 1993, *Progressive Grocer* predicted

that it might be the “Year of the Inner City” for the supermarket industry. The magazine acknowledged that in the past the industry had been “under siege for its performance in inner cities,” but that now the tide of public opinion was turning [112]. Supermarkets, chains in particular, were shifting from being viewed as part of the problem in urban communities, to part of the solution.

Community-oriented groups, from grassroots non-profits to large community development corporations, regarded the supermarket industry as an important partner in their visions for creating healthier and more equitable urban environments. They advocated for the lack of supermarket access to be on the public policy agenda, and to receive the governmental attention commensurate with the scale of the problem.

Advocate Mark Winne testified before the Urban Grocery Gap hearing, arguing: “Quality, affordable food should be accessible to everyone, regardless of their income or place of residence. In order for communities to achieve this goal, they will require vigorous application of public policy that will tip the balance of market forces favorably in their direction” [67]. The Community Food Resource Center in New York City articulated a new role for city government as an active planner and participant in supermarket development, rather than limit itself to its traditional role of regulation and oversight. At the Grocery Gap hearing, they submitted testimony arguing that: “Food is not like other types of retail. Food is a necessity and while government should not run supermarkets, it should be concerned when the industry stops meeting the needs of communities” [67].

Many of the specific policies that advocates and industry representatives alike proposed to lawmakers were solutions that has been recommended in earlier decades. What shifted, perhaps, was an expectation that the government, particularly local

government policymakers, take a more interventionist role in planning for supermarkets and aiding their development. In New York City, CFRC argued that there should be active coordination and planning for supermarket development across city agencies. CFRC helped establish a Working Group, comprised of relevant city agencies (including the department of Consumer Affairs, which just had released their scathing report on the inequalities in supermarket access in NYC) that would actively promote supermarket development in low-income areas [67].

The Consumer Affairs report itself criticized the tepid response to this problem from NYC elected officials and municipal agencies, claiming: “The City in the past has done little to improve this bleak picture, and what little has been done has been inadequately coordinated.” A new interventionist government, they explained, would “be affirmatively reaching out to store developers about building supermarkets in those low-income areas which City studies show can clearly support more supermarkets -- such as neighborhoods undergoing mini-population explosions as a result of the massive \$5.3 billion affordable housing production program” [56]. In 1992, CFRC and the New York State Food Merchants Association co-hosted a meeting where city planners from New York’s Department of City Planning explained recent proposed zoning changes that would expedite the development of mid-sized supermarkets to the audience of industry executives. CFRC also partnered with J.P. Morgan (an equity partner in The Retail Initiative, part of the Local Initiative Support Coalition) to host a high-level breakfast symposium for city officials and private developers to discuss prospects for supermarket development [67]. By 1997, the Department of Planning and Development in Chicago housed a project, Retail Chicago, which served as a liaison between city agencies and

retailers, developers and brokers across commercial sectors, including supermarket developers [122].

The community-based groups that testified at the Grocery Gap hearing spoke about their various grass-roots efforts they had engaged in for years to help inner city residents, particularly those most vulnerable to hunger and poor nutrition, acquire adequate access to food [67]. They also advocated for a more involved role of government to direct urban supermarket planning, as their work alone had been insufficient to solve the problem. Mark Winne discussed the various ventures of the Hartford Food System organizing group, which included public markets and entrepreneurial development for small vendors, but nonetheless concluded: “What is apparent to us is that partnerships involving public agencies, community organizations and private businesses are necessary to develop food retailing in urban neighborhoods. Whether a private business is a farmer, a small store owner, a giant food retailing corporation, there will usually be need for public and community participation to facilitate the development process.” Mr. Winne was a particular proponent of government support that would allow communities to devise their own unique and tailored strategies to solve the inadequacies of their local food system, rather than a top-down approach [67].

While acknowledging the ongoing work of community groups to help solve the problem of poor access, including joint ventures, self-help buying clubs, transportation assistance, and farmers markets, Dr. Cotterill outlined for public officials at the Grocery Gap hearing his recommendations for state action [67]. To attract and facilitate large supermarket development, city governments could remove regulatory barriers and expedite the supermarket permitting process, conduct market studies and share

demographic data with supermarket retailers, as well as offer financing assistance and the creation of Enterprise Zones. Dr. Cotterill described enterprise zones as “geographically defined areas where businesses are eligible to receive preferential treatment,” which might include lower property taxes or various tax credits [67]. Enterprise zones were widely discussed in the era as an urban redevelopment strategy more generally, which could also be applied to supermarkets [58, 61, 108]. While lawmakers spoke about enterprise zones with great optimism, those in supermarket development, both from the industry and the community, admitted that while enterprise zones provided a small bonus, they would not affect the ultimate decision of whether to invest in an inner city neighborhood [67].

Community Development Corporations (CDCs) had partnered with supermarkets for decades to provide financing for supermarket development projects. Catholic priest and founder of the New Community Corporation in Newark, New Jersey, Monsignor William Linder advocated for federal funding and support of CDC’s at the Grocery Gap hearing [67]. The New Community Corporation had been conducting anti-poverty work in Newark since 1968 - a year after the city experienced a major civil disorder that left 28 people dead. In 1987, Msgr. Linder helped bring a high-profile Pathmark supermarket to Newark’s Central Ward as an anchor tenet in a \$15 million neighborhood shopping center, which was widely cited as a model for community joint ventures. The neighborhood had not had a chain supermarket since the late 1960s. Msgr. Linder also served as a board member for The Retail Initiative, no doubt for his experience developing the Newark Pathmark as a community development venture. He framed the project as anti-poverty work, developed “from the bottom up and not from the top down;”

the new supermarket would in turn, “enable the people to begin to have an economic future” [67].

Whether independent or chain supermarkets were the best model to develop in the inner city was up for debate between the supermarket industry insiders and those involved in attracting new markets to urban areas. At various times, both types of supermarkets had been implicated in the problems of inner city food access. The chains had been accused of either abandoning low-income and minority consumers, or for providing inferior service and facilities at their inner city locations. Independent supermarkets were more likely to service inner city residents, but these stores were typically small and inefficient, with high-priced, lower quality food.

As in the previous decade, many argued that independents were better able to serve the inner city – they were more flexible to meet local demands, and they often had a better relationship with the community. In an interview conducted by the NYC Department of Consumer Affairs, the vice-president of a local voluntary cooperative supermarket chain argued on behalf of the independent model for the inner city: “Larger supermarkets get good deals from the City to come in. And why should they? Large supermarket chain stores have been ignoring the inner city areas for many years. But C-Town, Met Foods, and Associated are owned and run by local business people. These entrepreneurs are black and Hispanic, some are uneducated, all have a desire to contribute to the economic development of their communities” [56]. He contended that the quality issues of independents, that some of the stores were dirtier and more disordered, could be fixed with better management training. But chains could not compete with independents in providing the community the products, services, and

community support they wanted [56]. A Chicago-based marketing consultant explained the impact of encouraging chain supermarket development on black-owned grocery businesses to *Black Enterprise* in 1999, saying: “Many major chains are now going head to head with some of the African American grocers who profited when those supermarkets left black neighborhoods” [93]. A Baltimore-based blacked-owned supermarket chain, Stop Shop and Save, was given as one such casualty of new, state encouraged chain supermarket development [93].

In New York City in particular, independent merchants opposed the construction of large, suburban-style supermarkets, as the new competition might have harmed their viability. After all, they were the stores that had served the city when the big chains chose not to – now city agencies were trying to coax those same chains back into the city. These merchants were essentially accused of politicizing the issue of supermarket development to protect their own self-interest, getting local politicians involved in the public review process and delaying construction of new stores, most famously a Pathmark in Harlem [128]. CFRC, in their goal to improve supermarket access for the city’s poor neighborhoods, conducted a market study to test whether the independent’s fears were legitimate. According to their report submitted as testimony in the Grocery Gap hearing, “Super – Marketing: The Impact of New Supermarket Development on Existing Retail Stores in New York City Neighborhoods,” market segmentation would protect mid-sized supermarkets from competition [67]. Essentially, shoppers used these stores for different purposes than they would a large supermarket so they would not be in direct competition. The report does admit that markets that would be most affected by a nearby modern supermarket were “marginal” supermarkets, which, they argued, may have closed down

regardless of a new store opening. A new supermarket might either encourage these conventional supermarkets to renovate and improve their services, or hasten the decline of poor quality stores already on the margins [67].

A “Win-Win” for the Inner City: Supermarkets and Community Development

With growing enthusiasm about the business prospects of the inner city, the supermarket industry devised strategies for reducing barriers to entry in the market and disseminated advice through industry publications on how to capitalize on the growing opportunity. A central strategy used by the industry was to articulate the value the new supermarket would add to the community, and to position supermarket development within a large framework of urban economic revitalization. The supermarket would become the friend of local public officials and of the community. *Progressive Grocer* editorialized that “the return of supermarkets to or expanded presence within the inner city can become a win-win situation for all parties concerned” [129]. Aside from providing access to higher quality food at lower prices than most existing neighborhood options, the supermarket industry also argued it would grow jobs, train youth and minority workers for meaningful employment in the industry, and reduce crime and neighborhood blight through a variety of mechanisms. A 1999 article in *Progressive Grocer*, “Urban Renewal,” recommended that supermarket developers “regard the project not just as the opening of a new store, but as the revitalization of an entire neighborhood.” Some recent supermarket development projects had even included refurbishment of the nearby access streets and new street lighting [129].

Those involved in bringing supermarkets to urban communities spoke about the

overall good a supermarket could do in a community, particularly in communities with few other resources and high needs. Supermarkets offered more than just food. The president of LISC was quoted by an FMI publication as saying “We believe there is literally no other function that can do so many things to help a neighborhood at one time. Supermarkets breathe new life into a community” [74]. In additions to new jobs, chain supermarkets often invested in community projects. For example, supermarkets donated to local food banks, held special events and provided community spaces for the public, and offered educational activities for youth [93].

Because of the relative lack of other retail establishments in poor neighborhoods, inner city supermarkets provided an array of services and products beyond food. A new supermarket in Lowell, Massachusetts stocked more home goods than a supermarket of its size would be expected to sell, since there were few other places in the neighborhood for residents to buy essentials like stationary or can openers. Since few of their customers had bank accounts, the supermarket offered a check cashing service [125]. In the Newark Pathmark, a store with an explicit community-orientation, they provided free health screening and a nutritional program tied to food marketing campaigns within the store. Msgr. Linder described the community aspect of the store to the Grocery Gap committee: “There are seniors who go shopping everyday just for the social activity of being in that store and being able to relate to the young people employed there as well as to other shoppers whom they know. Shopping has become fun; people enjoy meeting other people. It has become truly an activity, a place to be, a community center. In summation, I think it is a total winner” [67].

In their attempt to market themselves as good neighbors and a positive

community institution, supermarkets developed job-training programs and committed to hiring residents from nearby neighborhoods. In Los Angeles Von's supermarket chain, which had made a large public commitment to investing in South Central after the riots, established a 14-week training program focusing on both work related skills and "life-management skills such as self-presentation, teamwork and conflict resolution" [115]. *Progressive Grocer* opined that for participants, "as well as for many other inner-city residents, supermarkets are not just a source of employment and of affordable, quality food products-they are an entity that affects the very quality of life" [115].

Though framed as a service to the community, the industry also admitted that the job training programs served their own interests as well. A 1991 article in *Progressive Grocer*, "Reaching Out to Minorities," detailed employment trends in the supermarket industry, and why minority hiring was important for the future of supermarketing [109]. According to the article, a "reason the industry has lagged in reaching for minority workers is that there was no economic need to do so." Supermarket work had always been considered a good job, and there had been little need for recruitment in the past. Those historically hired by chain supermarkets were what *Progressive Grocer* referred to as "traditional" employees – native-born, white, male workers [109]. And with fewer of those workers available because of changes in demographics, an FMI representative explained it was "natural that these (job-training and outreach) programs are beginning to be geared to women, minorities and the developmentally and physically disabled." FMI aimed to deal with the issue "constructively" by establishing ties with the National Urban League, and presenting at the league's annual meeting on the benefits of working in the supermarket industry [109]. The president of FMI sat on the board of the National Urban

League. FMI hosted two workshops about “dealing with minorities” at their annual meeting in 1991. Hiring from the nearby area was also thought to improve community relationships, and lessen the impact of shoplifting and crime in and around the store [109].

Despite the promises of employment and training opportunities for inner city residents, the supermarket industry was widely criticized by civil rights leaders for failing to hire black or Hispanic employees into positions with the possibility of advancement or power to make important decisions. The lack of minorities in either supermarket ownership or executive positions was one reason advocates cited for the industries poor record in minority hiring. In 1999, *Black Enterprise* reported that African Americans constituted 12.2% of all supermarket employees, yet fewer than 5% of them were in managerial positions; most African American employees worked as cashiers [93]. As a result, *Black Enterprise* argued that “the employees with the real decision-making power – those who determine pay rates, implement hiring practices, choose vendors, disperse shelf space and select reinvestment activities are non-African American” [93].

Spokesmen from civil rights organizations from the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), to the National Urban League and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), voiced their disappointment to the supermarket trade publications about the industry’s performance in hiring black and Hispanic workers. The national president of the SCLC told *Progressive Grocer* in 1991 that he considered the supermarket industry to be “at least two generations behind the rest of the country,” and that his organization would focus on targeting supermarkets to increase minority hiring [109]. The National Urban League and the NAACP engaged directly with specific companies to develop targets for minority hiring, as well as better

representation on executive boards and increasing purchases from black and other minority vendors [109].

Advocates emphasized not just minority training and hiring, but promoting black and Hispanic workers along the managerial and executive tracks within the industry. Even *Progressive Grocer* was explicit about the racial composition of the upper tier of the supermarket industry, writing in 1992 that, “a peak into the boardroom of any top company or the crowd of attendees at any executive conference reveals a preponderance of white faces” [111]. Some black supermarket executives interviewed by the trade publication explained that part of the problem was cyclical – since there were few black owners or executives, the industry offered little apparent room for advancement to young minority workers and therefore was not an attractive industry to join. The other issue was long-standing discrimination in hiring by predominantly white managers and executives; as several black grocery industry insiders explained to *Progressive Grocer*, “the industry, like most other big businesses, hires its own, with little thought toward racial parity.” Put clearly by Baltimore-based black supermarket owner Oscar Smith, “the ‘positions of power’ in large supermarket chains guarantee that few blacks will rise to the top of the corporate ladder” [111].

Not surprisingly, there was push back to the notion that there was an explicit racial bias in hiring or that training and advancement programs should be targeted to minority employees. Proponents of minority employment were prompted by the trade publications to explain why such programs and goals were not “reverse discrimination.” Kenneth Leaks, the first black district manager for a supermarket chain based in Jackson, Mississippi felt the need to defend his advancement to *Progressive Grocer* in 1996,

explaining, "I don't think I got the job because I was black. I got it because of my record and because of more than 12 years of hard work in the supermarket industry" [120].

Oscar Smith, told the trade publication in 1992 that "the big companies don't look hard enough for qualified black workers" – he argued: "It doesn't mean a quota. If a person is qualified, though, and able to produce, he ought to have the chance" [120].

A common refrain, reminiscent of earlier discourse over supermarket ownership, was that there were few black owners and executives because of discriminatory commercial lending. In 1992, *Progressive Grocer* profiled three black supermarket owners in its article, "Pride and Prejudice," who all agreed the biggest reason for the lack of black grocers was the lack of access to start-up capital [111]. One owner of a successful southern independent supermarket chain, Greg Calhoun, was repeatedly denied financing from banks. Mr. Calhoun ultimately gained access to credit through a loan made to his corporate employer, where he served as public relations director. He eventually expanded to owning six supermarkets in both predominantly black and predominantly white areas of Alabama. Following his success, he was asked to sit on the board for two of the banks that had previously denied him start-up capital. After the description of Mr. Calhoun's varied successes, *Progressive Grocer* asked, "So why aren't there more Greg Calhouns in the supermarket business?" Vice president of programs for the Urban League, Bill Haskins, offered an answer: "It's the same old problem – capital. Blacks don't have the same access to capital that whites do. It's the good old boy network" [111].

Policies or programs that aided minority business development were also subject to criticism as evidence for the "reverse discrimination" of affirmative action. During the

Grocery Gap hearing, Democratic representative from American Samoa Eni

Faleomavaega attempted to challenge this perception [67]. He lauded the efforts of Msgr. Linder and the New Community Corporation for using government incentive programs in their Pathmark Supermarket development in Newark's Central Ward, citing it as an example of how "grant programs are being successfully implemented and utilized for fellow Americans to become more self-sustaining." He challenged the narrative that many Americans assumed to be true, that entrepreneurs are successful only when they have their own money invested, because "Otherwise, if it is just a handout, what happens? The tendency is that there is no initiative. It just says, 'Well, it comes from Uncle Sam. So forget it. He can take the loss.'" He castigated the media for perpetuating that kind of thinking, which constructed black Americans in particular as dependent on government programs and lacking personal initiative. He argued, "I am sure that all that any good, red blooded American wants is just an equal opportunity, a chance to be successful, but somehow it always seems to be projected towards the minorities having this, getting something for nothing over the years, and they are not really willing to be participants in the free enterprise system so to speak" [67].

"The Lure of Underserved Markets": Profits and Motive in the Inner City

While supermarkets may offer valuable services and benefits to the communities they operate in, they are businesses and their motivating interest is in profit. Even as they framed the many positive externalities of supermarket development and built relationships across sectors, within the grocery trade industry, insiders were very clear that the inner city was, above all, an attractive market opportunity. There were some

challenges to be overcome, but the industry identified an opening for profitable investment and used various strategies to take advantage of that newly perceived opening. In its 1999 article, "Urban Renewal," *Progressive Grocer* offered two reasons why urban centers were becoming reestablished as important retail centers: "untapped financial power and the willingness of politicians and community organizations to work with retailers to bring companies back to the inner city" [129]. In the same article, the author at once lauded the motives of the supermarket industry, and explained that stores would still only open where they believed they could make money. The author cautions his readers: "Make no mistake about it. Supermarket operators certainly have altruistic motives in wanting to put once-proud neighborhoods back on the road to growth and prosperity. But retailers also want to establish their presence in areas where they have the potential to turn a profit. Inner cities fit the bill. In many inner-city neighborhoods, urban residents have more money to spend than stores in which to spend it" [129]. To the contrary, in an earlier *Progressive Grocer* article the president of a non-profit food advocacy group, Public Voice for Food and Health Policy, argued to the trade publication that in his opinion altruism played no role in the renewed interest in inner city supermarket development [124]. The industry was there to profit.

Reporting on the establishment of The Retail Initiative, the *Latino Merchant* explained to its readers that the multi-million dollar investment fund, with its powerful corporate investors, "should not be confused with philanthropy." Rather, the fund, "is just a tool to break into this potential market: the inner city" [76]. Supermarket operators and financiers were entering the inner city for a simple reason - they thought they could make money there. A supermarket financier stated the issue bluntly to *Chain Store Age*: "You

can talk about all the other feel good things. The bottom line is, if they're not going to make money, the retailers are not going to come" [127]. The economic theory of Harvard business school professor, Michael Porter, was widely cited in grocery trade publications as a strong proponent of the potential of inner city development. Porter served as the founder and CEO of the Initiative for the Inner City (ICIC), a think tank dedicated to urban prosperity through private sector investment and growth. Porter commented to *Progressive Grocer* in its 1999 article on the revival of the supermarket industry in cities, that: "Jobs, investment and businesses in our inner cities will materialize only as they have elsewhere - as the result of private, for-profit initiatives and investment based on economic self-interest and true competitive advantage" [129].

A constellation of factors combined to render the inner city an attractive money-making venture for the supermarket industry beginning in the middle of the 1980s and ramping up throughout the 1990s. As explained by *Progressive Grocer*, there was a favorable political and community environment for supermarket development [112]. Within the industry itself, there was a widely held opinion that suburban markets were saturated and there would be little new growth there. In contrast, America's cities were "understored" and therefore there was both unmet demand from consumers and little competition from other retailers [125]. *Progressive Grocer* explain in 1992 that, "The lure of underserved markets is that, by definition, they offer little in the way of competition" [110].

The language used by industry observers to describe the inner city market and its potential opportunity was reminiscent of that of early European exploration and conquest of foreign lands. There was the "lure" of the underserved market [110]. The inner city,

particularly black communities, represented “a new frontier” for the supermarket industry [93]. A retail financier in Hartford, Connecticut noted that the inner city was viewed “as one of the last horizons for development opportunities” [127]. The president of The Retail Initiative explained to *Chain Store Age* in 1998 why supermarket developers had ignored the potential of the inner city: “Retailers just hadn't been there in so long. It was almost like being in a foreign land.” But the good thing about developing this emerging market at home rather than literally travel for opportunities overseas, according to TRI president Peter Borges: “You don't need a passport, shots, to learn a new language or deal with currency swings” [127].

An exotic, open market existed “hidden” in our own backyards [127]. Once the “better” neighborhoods of the suburbs were overbuilt, *Chain Store Age* described in 1997, that, “stores and their builders are taking a second look at sites once considered *untouchable*” (emphasis added) [123]. *Progressive Grocer* made an analogy between the resurgence in attention to the inner city as a market for growth, with the ancient Greek myth of the phoenix: “Retailers are discovering that inner-city neighborhoods, once crucial to the industry's growth, have again become vital centers of attention. In Greek mythology, the phoenix was a bird that lived 500 years, burned to death on a pyre, then rose up from the ashes, young and invigorated, to live again” [129]. And so the supermarket industry would be reborn in the nation's cities, its readership was intended to understand.

In the 1990s, the perspective of the industry was that higher urban costs could be overcome by the greater profitability of urban locations. The Pathmark in Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood was one of the company's highest performing

locations within the 144-store chain [93]. As expressed by the vice-president of the Initiative for a Competitive Inner City to *Chain Store Age* in 1998, inner city stores often outperformed their suburban counterparts when measured by sales-per-square-foot [127]. In fact, the central argument of ICIC was that there was a competitive advantage in the inner city for retail and industrial development, which had been ignored. An ICIC study estimated that inner city markets had two to six times the retail demand per square mile compared to their wider regions [127].

Various studies found evidence for excess demand. The lack of quality, low-priced supermarkets in central cities meant many of those who could travel outside their neighborhoods for groceries did so. In 1997, the president of Public Voice for Food and Health Policy told *Progressive Grocer* that his organization had estimated that the Bronx was losing \$60 million in grocery sales each year to its neighboring suburbs [124]. This and other estimates of the buying power of urban consumers represented a vast, untapped opportunity for the supermarket industry, if they could overcome some of the ever present challenges in operating urban stores – acquiring large enough parcels of land and the higher costs of business due to insurance, crime, and taxes.

The interest in the inner city by the supermarket industry came in response to both changing urban demographics and a changing perspective on urban consumers. Suburbanites were moving back to the city, both empty nesters and young professional couples. Many of the new “inner city” stores touted by the supermarket trade publications about the rebirth of urban supermarketing, were being built in areas that had gentrified or were near middle class black neighborhoods, not the low-income areas most in need of better access to quality food at fair prices. In West Harlem, a Fairway supermarket

opened to great fanfare winning *Progressive Grocer's* "Store of the Month" in April 1996 [119]. Its customer base was a mix of residents from the gentrified areas to its south, and middle class black neighborhoods to its north, attracting customers from as far as the Bronx and Westchester County. Despite being a diverse and mixed income neighborhood, *Progressive Grocer* referred to the area as a place that "whites studiously avoid," and reported that some white shoppers would call the store to inquire if the area was safe before venturing in [119].

A neighborhood in West Baltimore saw the opening of a new Giant in the late 1990s, as part of the company's strategy to build stores in what they called "mature" inner city markets, since outer suburban areas were already "well-stored." The general manager of the new store explained the location and its demographics to *Supermarket Business* magazine in 1999, saying, "This isn't real hard-core inner city, but we draw a lot from the inner city and we go across the county line, too. Our draw radius is at least a couple miles and there's a nice mix of people here, mostly African-American" [130]. Inner city prospects meant the supermarket industry needed to reassess how they perceived urban consumers in general, and black consumers in particular. Some in the industry, and among those who studied it, argued that negative stereotypes guided business location decisions more than market analysis or reality. Part of the unrealized potential for new development in the inner city centered around a reassessment of the inner city consumer as a valuable customer.

Market Studies, Stereotypes, and the Black Consumer

Along with optimism about the potential for urban supermarket development were questions from within the industry and from outside observers about why chain supermarkets avoided black neighborhoods. The usual explanations were offered by the industry in their defense – central city locations where many black households were located were more costly and challenging to operate in. Customers on food assistance made smaller purchases, and there were wide fluctuations in demand throughout the month based on when assistance checks were dispersed. But within the industry there were also admissions that stereotypes and assumptions about the inner city consumer influenced their decision-making, and in doing, caused them to miss out on substantial profit opportunities. As *Black Enterprise* explained in their 1999 article, “Supermarket Blackout,” the “irony of this scenario is that mainstream supermarkets only stand to benefit by entering African American communities”[93]. To some extent, in their desire to invest in urban opportunities, the supermarket industry had to confront the assumptions it made about the inner city in general, and black consumers in particular.

On the one hand, the “mainstream” supermarket industry recognized that given demographic trends white Americans would comprise an increasingly smaller share of the American public in the decades to come [93]. Regarding the projected growth in black and Hispanic households in the coming 20 years, a 1992 article from *Chain Store Age*, “Are Minorities Neglected?,” asked: “do these minority markets represent opportunities for growth and expansion? Or are the commitments required to succeed in those markets, especially in low-income communities, too great to be worth the effort?” [60]. Throughout the 1990s, the explicit answer seemed to be that it was worth the effort, at least in and near middle class black and Hispanic urban areas.

The future of supermarketing was learning how to market to a wider variety of shoppers than what *Progressive Grocer* identified as the primary demographic target of chain supermarkets: “white, non-Hispanic females” [124]. In fact, the Consumer Affairs report unearthed a perception that some white supermarket operators may have avoided opening stores in black or Hispanic urban districts because they did not see those consumers as “their market.” The Chairman of the Board at Sloan’s Supermarkets explained his point of view: “for an Anglo company like my company - in other words, I can't hide what I am, I am what I am -- it was very difficult for us to market exclusively for a Hispanic neighborhood. And so we found it very difficult to maintain ourselves in that market against a series of voluntary stores where they are specifically pinpointing marketing to the neighborhood” [56]. In an attempt to tailor marketing and merchandising to the perceived demands of inner city residents, some large chains opened their new inner city supermarkets under different names. The A&P, for example, opened its urban locations under the banner of Food Emporium [56]. These chains may have identified a market for ethnic and regional foods in central cities that they had not recognized while investing in the suburban opportunities. *Black Enterprise* concluded that this demand might influence supermarket development, writing: “Even if the major chains don't want to recognize the African American community as an area of opportunity, they may not have a choice” [93].

One criticism of the supermarket industry was that it could not disentangle its assumptions about race and income in the inner city, and therefore assumed black neighborhoods were low-income and disordered. In 1999, *Black Enterprise* argued, “The lack of supermarkets in inner cities, where the majority of African Americans live, is

largely based on the same stereotypes that affect other aspects of black life" [93]. The supermarket industry, the article contended, assumed crime to be higher in black neighborhoods and thought black people to be uneducated, dependent on government assistance programs, and too poor to purchase high margin foods and services. The president of Restoration Supermarket Corporation, which ran the Bedford-Stuyvesant Pathmark in Brooklyn, rejected the assumption that black neighborhoods were higher in crime, commenting to *Black Enterprise* that, "There is still the perception that black neighborhoods are high risk because people associate color with high crime" [93]. He explained that crime was not an issue for his central city store, located in a predominantly black neighborhood. The CEO of a black-owned supermarket chain, Community Pride, argued to *Black Enterprise*, that because of these negative stereotypes, "big corporations haven't looked at minorities as viable consumers until recently." According to the director of research and communication at the Initiative for a Competitive Inner City, "The mistake retailers make when examining inner cities is in thinking that these are communities of poorer people" [93].

Perhaps the strongest evidence that the supermarket industry avoided black areas based on negative stereotypes and racist assumptions was the fact that chain supermarkets rarely located in middle class or affluent black neighborhoods. In a 1992 interview with *Chain Store Age*, a marketing consultant specializing in marketing to minority consumers lamented the dearth of modern, clean supermarkets in posh black neighborhoods in Atlanta [60]. The consultant, Chuck Morrison, explained to the trade publication, "This is no ghetto. This is a wealthy community, home to leading African-American business executives and professionals. Andy Young lives there. Coretta Scott King lives there. The

underlying question is how much of the real reason for failure to market in black and Hispanic areas has to do with underlying racial attitudes, rather than business factors?" [60]. Marketing studies demonstrated the buying power and shopping habits of black consumers. *Black Enterprise* reported that one study found African Americans spent \$23 more per shopping trip than other ethnic groups, and another found that black households spent more per capita than white households on food that required preparation, including seasonings that accompanied cooked foods [93]. The magazine reported that in 1997 that black Americans spent \$44.6 billion on food. They concluded, "If the major food chains chose their locations based on the facts, supermarkets would be popping up all over black neighborhoods." *Black Enterprise* laid out the consequences of supermarket chains underestimating the buying power of black communities and overestimating the risk: "fewer employment opportunities, fewer competitively priced product choices and little access to philanthropic contributions" [93].

Another misperception about black food shoppers was that they preferred junk and convenience foods. A 1995 study, "No Place to Shop" by Public Voice for Food and Health Policy demonstrated that urban black shoppers bought a high percentage of perishable food items, including meats, and that "sales from perishable products represent nearly half of the total dollar amount of total supermarket sales" [82]. At the Grocery Gap hearing, Msgr. Linder explained that the produce and fish departments were the most popular among customers. Originally planning to sell only a limited stock of frozen fish, community development board members warned the store operators that frozen fish products would not be acceptable to African American shoppers. Since opening a fresh

seafood counter, Msgr. Linder exclaimed, “Our fresh fish sales are now calculated in tonnage, not pounds” [67].

In New York City, the Consumer Affairs study documented the perspective of both the supermarket industry and community advocates about why grocery stores in low-income neighborhoods sold a limited variety of products compared with more affluent areas [56]. According to the report, interviews with store executives revealed an “intangible cause” of stocking differences – the stereotyping of low-income populations. Executives argued that operators “merely sell what the people living there want,” and that independent owners often had better knowledge of local needs. The vice president of a voluntary co-operative chain in New York City was quoted by the Consumer Affairs report explaining why merchandising differed between neighborhoods: “If their ethnic background is such that they buy sweets, that's what you have to sell. For example, Hispanics drink sweet, sugary sodas, and that's what you have to sell” [56].

Activists interviewed by the Consumer Affairs agency responded that, “in reality, few community residents operate voluntary cooperative supermarkets, and that low-income residents do not want inferior meat and overage dairy products” [56]. A representative of a senior citizens organization in Brooklyn’s predominantly Afro-Caribbean Brownsville neighborhood argued that the selection in local supermarket chains was inferior to that of the same chain in white neighborhoods and that the predominance of junk food and alcohol sold in small neighborhood stores sent a clear message from the supermarket industry: “Brownsville consumers are a bunch of beer guzzling-junk food eating Black folks.” The Consumer Affairs report found that the

checkout counter displays in the A&P in Harlem all stocked candy, whereas the Greenwich Village location had candy in only two of their checkout counters [56].

Ultimately, black supermarket owners and operators argued to *Progressive Grocer* that black customers were no different in their basic needs than the supermarket industry's "traditional" customer base. Kenneth Leaks, the first black district manager of a Southern chain, explained to the trade publication that he wanted to "master the inner-city market," which, he maintained was no different than any other market: "Customers want the same things: clean stores, friendly service and variety" [120]. Greg Calhoun, a black supermarket owner, generated his success by buying "neglected" markets in black neighborhoods, renovating the stores' physical infrastructure, and turning around significant profits. One store went from \$40,000 a week in sales to \$150,000 within the first six months of operation. What was his secret to successfully operating in black communities? According to Mr. Calhoun: "A supermarket in a black community is going to be judged on prices, service and selection, just like any other supermarket."

Describing the investment he put into the formerly neglected stores, Mr. Calhoun told *Progressive Grocer*, "All I did was clean the store up, stock it with quality product, and hire good people from the community. The worst thing you can do is take a community for granted" [111].

Supermarkets in the 1990s: Summary and Conclusions

Throughout the 1990s, old grievances remained relevant: inner cities had few large chain supermarkets where quality food was sold at reasonable prices. Instead, inner city grocery stores were smaller, typically independent markets, with limited variety,

lesser quality perishable food, and high prices. Non-profits organizations advocated for public policy responses to the problem of poor urban food access, urging local governments to become more involved in facilitating supermarket development. In turn, the supermarket industry sought investment opportunities in the city, given saturation in the suburbs and market studies that demonstrated the buying power of inner city residents. The supermarket industry, public officials, and community advocacy groups were generally aligned – promoting supermarket development as an essential component of urban revitalization and creating healthier communities. The supermarket industry registered this shift in tone. An FMI Issues Bulletin article about supermarket ventures in inner city neighborhoods from 1993 opined, “Fifteen years ago a workshop entitled “Must the Poor Pay More” might have served as a forum for supermarket bashing, but this time panelists at the recent Consumer Federation of America Assembly were supportive of supermarkets and their attempts to set up shop there” [69]. Consumer advocates, a group that once challenged the record of the supermarket industry on its service to inner city shoppers, now sought partnerships and cooperation with the industry. The supermarket industry positioned itself as a good neighbor, a stabilizing institution, an engine for urban development that should receive state support in its mission to serve “under-stored” neighborhoods.

Yet there is little evidence that the supermarket industry in this era built new stores in the neighborhoods most in need of high quality, low cost food. Rather, supermarkets, looking for the “next frontier” of profits, gave a second look to gentrifying areas and stable African American neighborhoods in urban areas. Despite high-profile campaigns to hire and train inner city residents, black and Hispanic employees were still

underrepresented in managerial and executive positions in large chains. New supermarket development may have even forced the closure of black-owned supermarkets that had been serving central city neighborhoods in the absence of interest by the mainstream supermarket industry.

What changed, then, by the 1990s were not the conditions themselves, but how those conditions were constructed as a problem amenable to policy solutions. There was more confidence within the policy discourse that the lack of healthy and affordable food in low-income urban neighborhoods could be solved through the free market, if facilitated by government incentives. The supermarket industry wanted to return to cities to seek new sources of profit, and local governments in particular were in a position to broker that development by reducing regulations and coordinating the services of various relevant agencies. Private capital options, such as The Retail Initiative, became more widely available for supermarket development, and these development corporations worked closely with public officials and the supermarket industry to plan large-scale urban revitalization projects. The role of government shifted from consumer protection and business regulation, to a facilitator of markets and private enterprise. Public-private partnerships between the supermarket industry, development corporations, and public officials, were poised to solve the problems of hunger and inequality in the city.

There were a few important gaps in the tidy narrative offered by the supermarket industry and its promoters in the public and private sectors. The first was whether new supermarket development was occurring in low-income neighborhoods, and thus opening access to quality food at reasonable prices to populations most at risk of hunger and malnutrition in the city. Evidence from the discourse suggests that new supermarket

development occurred in districts that local governments had targeted for revitalization and where gentrification was already occurring. Others stores were being built in or near middle class black neighborhoods, which ought to raise questions about why neighborhoods with the purchasing power to sustain a supermarket had been avoided by the industry in the first place. New market studies, some conducted by or for local governments, demonstrated that inner city residents spent many of their food dollars outside their neighborhoods where they could acquire higher quality food at lower prices.

The inner city was an “untapped” market; civil right organizations and the supermarket industry would offer very different explanations for why that was so (institutional racism or a challenging business environment). And these various explanations would lead to policies with important distinctions and implications for economic and racial justice, as well as for health parity. Despite the enthusiasm for supermarket redevelopment in cities from non-profits and public officials, and government action to facilitate such development, it is not clear that such a policy direction would improve food access for poor inner city residents or address systemic racial injustice in any meaningful way.

4-8 Evolution of the Policy Discourse: 1960s - 1990s

From the 1960s through the end of the 1990s, urban supermarket access and equality in supermarket operating conditions rose and fell on the political agenda – achieving its greatest visibility in the late 1960s and then again in the early 1990s. In the late 1960s, as supermarkets burned during the urban riots, public and policy attention was given to the state of the poor urban consumer. Groceries were typically sold in outdated,

crowded supermarkets and small mom-and-pop stores. Customers were suspicious of the prices for food and household goods; they accused stores, chains and independents alike, of overcharging at the register, failing to stock advertised sale items, and raising prices in tandem with the release of welfare payments. Few supermarkets were black-owned and the industry had a poor record of hiring from the community or promoting black employees along a managerial track.

In the private sector, consumer protection advocates, civil rights activists, and organized community groups sought redress for exploitation and discrimination from the federal government. The supermarket industry rejected accusations of unethical conduct and offered a different narrative – the problem was that too few chain supermarkets operated in the inner city and so residents could not benefit from the efficiency of the modern chain market. Far from the villain portrayed by community activists, supermarkets could be good neighbors that at once stabilized the neighborhood and provided inner city families with the quality food at low prices so important for good health.

Throughout the discourse from the 1960s through the 1990s, the position of the supermarket industry remained remarkably stable. The inner city offered too many challenges for the industry to be successful in urban areas without government assistance. Thus, the best role of government was to implement policies that removed or reduced barriers to entry – particularly lowering taxes, facilitating an easier permitting process among local agencies, and aiding in land acquisition either through land write-downs or making supermarkets eligible for inclusion in larger redevelopment policies. Industry representatives advocated for these positions throughout each decade of the discourse.

Individual owners and operators of supermarkets may not have shared the same general interests as the representatives of their industry. When trade publications interviewed storeowners about their interest in operating in the inner city, many indicated that no amount of profit or government assistance could entice them there. Urban minorities were “not their market.”

However, beginning in the mid-1980s, gentrification and government redevelopment of some urban downtowns renewed the interest of both the large chains and independents, which had more experience operating in urban areas and perhaps greater flexibility in meeting local demands than a standardized regional or national chain. The industry, in partnership with local governments and non-profit organizations began to recognize the untapped buying power and attractive shopping profile of minority consumers. By 1993, *Progressive Grocer* predicted it would be the “Year of the Inner City” for the grocery industry. As the interests of non-profits, government, and the industry aligned, supermarkets in the city rose in visibility and ascended on the policy agenda.

How the policy discourse evolved over time from its two moments of highest visibility may be best demonstrated by analyzing the two major hearings held on inner city supermarket access in each time period. In 1967 and 1968 a series of Congressional hearings were held to determine the validity of accusations made against the supermarket industry by inner city residents. A quarter of a century later, just months after the Los Angeles riots in 1992, another Congressional hearing examined the inequality in access to quality food stores in the inner city and what might be done to address it. The titles themselves are revealing: the first hearing was called “Consumer Problems of the Poor:

Supermarket Operations in Low-Income Areas and the Federal Response,” and the latter titled, “Urban Grocery Gap.”

The problem definition in the first hearing is explicit, as is the onus of the federal response. The Congressional investigation in the late 1960s was into the consumer problems of low-income Americans in acquiring quality groceries at fair prices. The policy question at hand, then, was how ought the federal government intercede on behalf of poor consumers to protect against exploitation and to promote access to quality, affordable food? By the second major hearing on this issue in 1992 the focus had clearly changed. The problem was framed around the “grocery gap” - that there were few quality supermarkets in urban areas, and the implied logic suggested that there should be more of them. The public policy question for the federal government becomes how to facilitate closing the grocery gap in urban communities.

Unlike later decades, in the 1960s the public policy discourse around the issue of supermarkets in the city was not limited to the simple lack of supermarkets in poor or predominantly black neighborhoods and the concurrent need for more. Indeed, it was the supermarket industry at Congressional hearings that suggested the problems of urban grocery (namely, high prices and low quality) stemmed from the lack of access to chain supermarkets in the inner city. However, consumer advocates and civil rights groups framed the problems of urban grocery with important distinctions from the industry. Chain supermarkets in particular were accused of discriminatory behavior in black neighborhoods, as were the independents that more typically dotted poor urban communities. Charges included raising prices when welfare checks were issued, “padding” the bills at the checkout lines, not offering sales, and stocking inferior products.

Rather than the salvation of poor neighborhoods, supermarkets were seen as another exploitative institution profiting from the restriction of black Americans to participate in economic and civic life as fully protected citizens. Thus, the policy discourse over supermarkets in poor areas brought up housing segregation, the creation of the racial ghetto, and the niche of business exploitation that could flourish in black communities. The answer, therefore, among civil rights groups at least, was not more or better supermarkets, but racial justice and the dismantling of the slums, as well as wealth creating opportunities for black Americans and strong consumer protection regulations.

By the early 1990s, the agreed upon public policy problem of urban grocery was the disparity in access to quality supermarkets between the cities and the suburbs, between predominantly black and predominantly white neighborhoods. Representatives from non-profits focused on hunger and nutrition were particularly vocal about the need for more and better supermarkets to safeguard dietary health, though many also advocated for community-led market alternatives, like food co-operatives, joint ventures, and farmers markets. The role of federal and local governments was to reduce barriers to entry so that the supermarket industry could provide for nutritional needs of consumers and contribute to the economic development goals of the public sector. Some in the grocery industry noted that by facilitating chains to return to the cities they had studiously avoided for decades, they would displace independent and often minority-owned supermarkets and grocery stores, which had served the city in that time. They also pointed out that the “mainstream” supermarket industry avoided middle class black neighborhoods, as well as poor central city areas. And, perhaps they were also returning to the city as it gentrified, not to serve the inner city resident who since at the least the

1960s has consistently shopped in small, crowded, outmoded supermarkets selling poorer quality food at higher prices than were found in suburban or white neighborhoods. Based on the policy discourse, inequality in quality food access in American cities is far from a modern phenomenon.

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CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

5-1 Overview of Key Findings

The purpose of this study was to historicize urban supermarket access as a public policy problem – uncovering the actors and interests that shaped the discourse and proposed a set of solutions to advance those interests. In addition, through both interpretive and empirical methodologies, the present analysis shined light on how the actual conditions of urban grocery have changed throughout the study time period (1970 to 2010) and provided insight into why those changes occurred.

The case study of Brooklyn, New York demonstrated that supermarkets in fact closed their doors in large numbers, particularly between 1970 and 1980, as poverty increased and the share of white households decreased throughout the borough. Black neighborhoods, particularly higher poverty black neighborhoods, had a higher ratio of persons to supermarkets than white neighborhoods throughout the study time period (1970 to 2010), though discrepancies attenuated over time (4,065 to 3,030 persons per supermarket in 1970 [p-value < 0.001]; 3,540 to 3,358 persons per supermarket in 2010 [p-value=0.304] between majority black and majority white tracts). Given the higher population density in black areas than white areas, particularly in 1970, the higher average person per supermarket figures may not be surprising.

Population density is an important component of supermarket location decision-making; the industry considers population density and density of household incomes when considering whether a market has the buying power to sustain a supermarket

(Pothukuchi, 2005). For example, suburbs may be less densely populated, but have high enough incomes to sustain a large store; conversely, areas in the inner city may have lower incomes, but high population densities and therefore sufficient buying power. Recently, population density was described as a “powerfully strong predictor” of closer proximity to a supermarket (Wilde et al., 2014). In Brooklyn, black neighborhoods were most densely populated and had the highest average number of persons per store. In the discourse analysis, a consistent theme running through the decades was the characterization of supermarkets in black neighborhoods as crowded and dirty. Importantly, these stores were also smaller and more outdated than supermarkets in more affluent areas or the suburbs. Higher population density in black areas and more people shopping in the same small and aging buildings can help explain why these markets were so crowded and the infrastructure deteriorated.

High population density was also directly linked to how segregation actually unfolded historically in urban centers. As described in the policy discourse analysis, black households were restricted by policy and market discrimination into few neighborhoods (i.e. redlining). In the 1960s these neighborhoods were often referred to as “slums,” as they were overcrowded and landlords allowed the physical infrastructure to deteriorate. The term “inner city” arose to define predominantly black neighborhoods since they were often centrally located. For this reason, one measure of segregation is referred to as centralization. Massey and Denton identify five distinct measures of segregation (evenness, isolation, centralization, concentration, and clustering) – though in health and segregation literature evenness and isolation are the most common metrics (e.g., the dissimilarity index) (1988). Even simpler, many “food desert” studies use

percent black within a census tract as a proxy for segregation, with a tracts greater than 80 percent black considered a segregated area (Kurtz, 2013).

Elsewhere, Kurtz has argued that the alternative measures of segregation can lead to a more historically informed analysis of how segregation affected (and affects) access to food retail (Kurtz, 2013). In the Brooklyn case study, the choropleth maps demonstrated the distribution of black and white households spatially across the borough of Brooklyn (Figures 4.1 and 4.2). Centralization of black households is clear within central Brooklyn neighborhoods, such as Bedford-Stuyvesant, Crown Heights and Brownsville. There is also visual evidence of clustering – which is the contiguous distribution of predominantly black neighborhoods, as well as concentration - the density of members of a group within a particular area. Black households were concentrated in contiguous and centralized census tracts throughout the study time period. These measures of segregation speak to the historical process of spatial isolation and overcrowding in black neighborhoods that surely influenced not just the presence of supermarkets, but the quality of the shopping environment within existing stores.

While the “food desert” literature today is largely focused on which neighborhoods have more or less access to full-service supermarkets, the supermarket policy discourse of the past encompassed more than concerns about proximity. Community advocates and public officials voiced concerns about the behavior and conditions of supermarkets, both independents and chains, within the inner city. In the 1960s in particular, inner city residents were much more concerned with the behavior of large chains in their neighborhoods than with the lack of them. From the crowded and disordered store environments, to accusations of price gouging and discriminatory service,

supermarkets were often seen as predatory in the inner city. The industry, on the other hand, suggested that the real culprit behind inner city dissatisfaction with their grocery options was the lack of chain supermarkets found there. The same objective conditions were defined radically differently by each of these stakeholders, and these conflicting positions generated quite different policy responses.

John Kingdon argued that, “Conditions become defined as problems when we come to believe that we should do something about them” (Kingdon, 1984). The 136 original documents analyzed for the policy discourse analysis demonstrated the continuity of inequality in the marketplace for black Americans and for poor communities across the study period. Though conditions of the marketplace for groceries in poor urban areas were relatively stable from the 1960s through the 1990s, the meanings embedded in those conditions reflected the shifting interests and political contexts of its observers; thus, leading to different ideas about what ought to be done to address the problem.

Can discrepancies between chain supermarkets in black and white neighborhoods be explained by the bad behaviors of a few unethical merchants, or as a typical manifestation of the exploitative niche created by segregation and institutionalized discrimination? Did quality supermarkets avoid the inner city because the environment was unviable for profit or because the industry did not recognize the value of the inner city customer? Did supermarkets return to the city to be part of the revitalization of the nation’s urban cores, or did advocates and policymakers assist the industry to profit from a population it had long ignored and under-valued?

Ultimately, this research probed the origins of disparities in access to high quality supermarkets in the inner city, and the ability of proposed solutions to either transform or simply mitigate the harms of those underlying causes. In “Closing the Food Gap,” an illuminating memoir and institutional history of food system advocacy in Hartford, Connecticut, Mark Winne argued that, “The food gap can be understood as a failure of our market economy to serve the basic human needs of those who are impoverished.” He continued, “In short, if communities weren’t poor, they would have supermarkets” (Winne, 2008). In this view, the outcome of urban food access disparities is rational from an economic standpoint, but Winne reminds us, unacceptable from a humane and social one, and so requires advocacy and intervention. This market-based explanation is the primary causal story used in mainstream “food desert” literature in public health research. Even as its proponents readily acknowledge that segregation and discrimination racialized urban poverty, it is poverty and its attendant problems (crime, depopulation, poor dietary behaviors) that explain supermarket flight and barriers to redevelopment (Ver Ploeg, 2009).

In a number of ways, the present study, both through the discourse analysis and the historical supermarket analysis, challenges and complicates this point of canon in food access discourse. Supermarkets certainly closed their inner city locations. For example, this research revealed that Brooklyn lost nearly half of its supermarkets between 1970 and 2010. The share of persons living in poverty grew in many American cities, including Brooklyn, particularly across the 1980s, in both racialized and gendered dimensions (Figure 4.3 demonstrates the growth in high poverty tracts in Brooklyn across the study time period). Yet, there are many examples across the policy discourse that

complicates the hegemony of profitability in supermarket industry decision-making and shines light on the ways that race, class, and capital intersect in American cities to shape the marketplace for food.

Profit, Rationality, and Racism in the Inner City Marketplace

Findings from the present policy discourse analysis challenge the conclusions that disparities in supermarket access are an unfortunate but rational outcome of increasing urban poverty (Winne, 2008). The existing market failure explanation relies on the following assumptions: first, that poor urban areas were not profitable for supermarkets to operate in; second, that supermarkets scarcity in predominantly black neighborhoods was explained by low buying power and high poverty in those communities (i.e., class, not race, explains supermarket locations); and third, that profitability was the most influential basis for supermarket industry decision-making when choosing locations. The present study complicates and challenges these assumptions in several ways.

First, there are conflicting opinions throughout the discourse about the profitability of poor areas, even from within the supermarket industry. Though industry representatives presented a remarkably consistent story in government hearings about the problems of operating in low-income urban areas (land acquisition, insurance rates, taxes, crime), individual operators and industry insiders offered a variety of opinions about prospects in the inner city when interviewed in different forums, such as the supermarket trade publications. Across the decades, many argued that if you ran a clean, well-managed store that offered the proper merchandising mix, the inner city offered great opportunities for profit and success. In fact, even in the late 1960s the inner city was

being referred to as one of the last remaining “untapped markets” for investment and business development, presaging the discourse of the 1990s as the industry “rediscovered” the potential of the inner city.

Further, an important critique of the supermarket industry in the 1960s and the 1970s was the charge of supermarket “profiteering” in low-income and immobile inner city communities. In the 1960s, between chain supermarkets raising prices in black neighborhoods when welfare checks were issued and independent merchants accused of padding the bills of poor customers, the supermarket industry was seen as exploitative capital. The industry drained the wealth from communities made vulnerable by systematic discrimination in the market for employment, housing, and credit. As food prices rose in the 1970s, public outcry led to federal investigations into charges of price gouging and over-concentration in the supermarket industry. The inner city was seen as a place where high profits could be made from poor customers with few alternatives. After all, everybody needs to eat.

A consistent criticism of inner city supermarkets, particularly in black neighborhoods, was that they were dirty, over-crowded, and in poor physical condition. By the 1960s the first generation of chain supermarkets in central cities, many built before the Second World War, were aging and becoming obsolete – these stores required investment and renovation to provide a high quality shopping environment. Yet, in the inner city there was little incentive to do so, given the increased taxes that would come with refurbishment, and the higher relative cost of urban renovation rather than new development in the wide open suburban market. In later decades, as supermarkets closed and some were re-opened by black entrepreneurs, stories ran in the grocery trade press

about how the success of the new owners hinged on their renovations. The moral of these stories was that urban supermarkets could be successful if they offered a pleasant shopping environment, which reflected the value the ownership placed in its customers. Chains that did invest in inner city locations, like Pathmark, reported that those locations were among the highest grossing stores across the company. It is not clear that poor communities could not support a profitable supermarket; however, evidence does suggest there was limited interest in making the investments needed to operate profitable stores, especially given the relative ease and profit potential of suburban development.

Even so, it is challenging to disentangle the role of increasing poverty and the changing demographics of inner city neighborhoods on supermarket investment decisions as white and more affluent households left the city. If supermarkets left the city because of worsening market conditions, it follows that the industry failed to adequately serve predominantly black areas because they were poor, not because they also happened to be black. Did supermarkets follow white communities in their migration to the suburbs because they were a more affluent and therefore profitable market to serve? Or did supermarkets chains close marginal stores in the city as neighborhoods became more predominantly black, either because of overt racism, implicit stereotypes about black communities, or because they did not identify black consumers as “their market”?

A variety of evidence points to the importance of white racial fear and stereotypes about black Americans to explain supermarket development decisions, challenging the second and third assumption of the market-based explanation. Even middle class black neighborhoods suffered a relative lack of chain supermarkets, demonstrating that profitability was not the only reason the supermarket industry made investment decisions

between the city and the suburbs. During the Consumer Problems of the Poor hearings in the late 1960s, while industry representatives suggested there was no problem operating in “ghetto areas,” union representatives argued that the Committee wasn’t hearing the entire story. They suggested that the chain representatives were afraid to be candid, but that operators wanted to shutter locations in black neighborhoods for fear of future riot damage. In her speech to the supermarket industry the same year, the Federal Trade Commissioner wondered “whether antagonism and mistrust of the community, so frequently reflected in pilferage, vandalism, and in extreme cases, the riots make expansion plans at this time wholly unrealistic and doomed to ultimate failure.” Clearly, the industry harbored a sense of unease and fear in operating in black areas following the riots of the mid to late 1960s.

In the 1970s in particular, the discourse focused on the environmental problems of operating supermarkets in the predominantly black inner city. Marketing academic Gordon Bloom argued that the proximity to public housing, and the youths found there, could doom any large supermarket development project. The less-reliable “indigenous” workforce in the inner city, worn down by past discrimination and failure, was argued to further threaten the success of any inner city operation, since qualified white workers, especially women, often refused to work in inner city locations. Within the discourse, black neighborhoods were considered unsafe and “hostile” to business interests, and the residents of inner cities were described as suffering from moral and cultural deficiencies at odds with the self-service format of the traditional supermarket industry.

In the 1970s, black ownership was widely considered a viable solution to the retreat of the mainstream supermarket industry from black neighborhoods, as black

owners might have a better relationship with the community. Yet black business development suffered from chronic discriminatory access to credit, making renovation and sufficient start-up capital difficult to attain. Black owners also tended to take-over the buildings abandoned by chains as they left the city; however, these locations were often problematic, as they were small, often dirty, and the infrastructure was obsolete and in need of renovation. These challenges led Amsterdam News publisher John Procope to argue that the solution of black ownership was a trap, rather than an opportunity. Through the 1990s, black businessmen continued to argue that their investments were restrained by redlining in commercial lending. Researchers such as Timothy Bates and Daniel Immergluck have repeatedly substantiated such claims about discriminatory lending and poor access to adequate start-up capital for black-owned businesses (Bates, 1997; Immergluck, 2004). Furthermore, black ownership was no guarantee against exploitative practices against vulnerable communities – some accounts of the riots recall damage against black grocery stores implicated in the same unethical tactics as white grocers.

Perhaps the most convincing evidence that the mainstream supermarket industry avoided black areas because of race rather than community buying power is the relative absence of supermarkets from middle class and affluent black communities. By the 1990s, supermarket trade publications ran stories such as “Are Minorities Neglected?” in *Chain Store Age*, which reported on the largely missed opportunity of the “minority market” in the inner city. New market studies were demonstrating the buying power of black communities, demographic trends predicted a larger future share of non-white Americans, and the suburban market offered little growth potential. The industry warned its operators that by avoiding black neighborhoods, they were missing out on one of the remaining

areas for growth in the industry. Again, it was argued that with the proper merchandising, employee training programs, and community relationship programs, the supermarket industry could be successful serving the “under-stored” black community.

But why were black communities “under-stored” to begin with? Food access research from the previous decade consistently demonstrates that independent of income, fewer chain supermarkets were found in predominantly black urban neighborhoods compared with white neighborhoods (Morland, Wing, Diez Roux, & Poole, 2002; Walker et al., 2010; Zenk et al., 2005). The relative lack of supermarkets cannot be explained by area buying power or high poverty. Trade publications suggested that there were few market studies on minority communities, and so stereotypes dominated business decisions – for example, predominantly black areas might be conflated with higher poverty areas, even if it were not true.

Interviews with some candid store operators suggest that white operators may not identify non-white customers as “their market”, and preferred to operate in predominantly white areas. *Black Enterprise* made a convincing argument in their 1999 article, “Supermarket Blackout” that, “The lack of supermarkets in inner cities, where the majority of African Americans live, is largely based on the same stereotypes that affect other aspects of black life.” Associations in the public imaginary of crime and social disorder with black neighborhoods, more explicitly discussed in the 1960s and 1970s, has some power in explaining why even affluent black neighborhoods lacked (and continue to lack) supermarkets.

It seems that until the suburbs were thoroughly saturated, the industry was not interested in discovering the urban market potential that already existed and lay relatively

under-exploited, at least by the large chains. Even as the industry lauded the social benefits of supermarket development and promoted public-private partnerships to reduce barriers to entry in urban areas, the industry clearly articulated their interest in the market for its growth potential. While some of the investment occurred in gentrifying areas, which represented a new market opportunity, clearly some of the new investment occurred in or near stable, middle class black communities that had long been avoided by the industry.

These findings complicate the claim that disparities in supermarket access are best understood as a market failure, engendered when urban communities lost buying power sufficient to maintain a high quality supermarket. While increasing urban poverty is surely an important reason why the supermarket industry favored suburban development rather than continued urban investment in this time period (until gentrification renewed interest in some urban areas) it is not the complete story. Poor areas could be profitable, disparities in access between white and black neighborhoods could not be reduced to class differences, and profitability was not the only motivation for supermarket investment. And, of course, racialized urban poverty in America itself is the product of discriminatory policies and practices, not an outcome of the free market. The ghetto is a cause of inequality in access to quality food at fair prices, but increased poverty therein is only one pathway among others through which disparities were created.

Ghetto Formation, Social Isolation, and the Marketplace

Since the end of de jure segregation, residential immobility has been widely understood in public discourse as a product of concentrated poverty, rather than of racial

discrimination – just as poor food access in the inner city is understood as a market failure, rather than a problem of exploitation in the marketplace. In “Ghetto: The Invention of a Place, The History of an Idea,” Mitchell Duneier traces the history of “the ghetto” as a sociological construct. He argued that the ghetto is not merely a place of either racial segregation or of concentrated poverty, but “a space for intrusive social control of poor blacks” (Duneier, 2016). A decade earlier, Douglas Massey identified the ghetto as a set of neighborhoods exclusively inhabited by members of a group, regardless of class status (though he then demonstrates how racial segregation has influenced wealth formation) (Massey, 2008). Conversely, (and more influentially) sociologist William Julius Wilson defined the ghetto as an area of highly concentrated poverty (greater than 40 percent of a census tract living below the poverty line), removing the role of race or ethnicity from the equation (Wilson, 1980). Wilson advocated for race-neutral anti-poverty policies, as he reasoned that such policies would disproportionately assist black Americans (due to the higher rates of poverty in black neighborhoods), and that ultimately, whites could not be counted on to support race-conscious policies. Aspects of his work were seized upon by white liberals during the 1990s, and helped legitimize urban policies that ignored the racial dimension of urban poverty and spatial immobility (Duneier, 2016). When it came to urban supermarket policies, the de-racialized policy discourse of the era was no different.

In contrast, the discourse of the 1960s directly confronted how ghetto formation created conditions where exploitative food merchant practices could flourish. Indeed, the ghetto was profitable for the various industries that arose to within and around it to take advantage of the residential immobility of black households and the discrimination in

employment and lending that truncated black wealth creation. According to Duneier, the ghetto “had become a site for the pursuit of profit by capitalist entrepreneurs” (Duneier, 2016). A diverse body of literature describes in detail the ways in which industries rose to profit from residential immobility and isolation, from real estate developers, landlords, and rent collectors (both white and black) (Connolly, 2014), high-interest creditors, debt collectors, and wage garnishment industries (Caplovitz, 1965; Hyman, 2011), to the services around repossession and eviction (Desmond, 2016). Non-profit service organizations and social workers also generate their livelihood from racialized, concentrated urban poverty, which has been criticized as the “Non-Profit Industrial Complex” by feminists of color (Incite!, 2007) and “social work colonialism” by famed psychologist and chronicler of the urban ghetto, Kenneth Clark (Duneier, 2016).

In the market for food, residential isolation and limited mobility meant poor households were largely captive to neighborhood merchants. Independent grocery stores often sold on credit to poor customers when money had run out by the end of the month. In the 1960s, the lack of transparency in bookkeeping and high interest rates at ghetto food merchants was one of the allegations cited during the riots as examples of exploitation in the market place of the poor. At the time, some argued that higher interest rates were necessary to account for higher costs of doing business in the inner city; economist Walter Williams argued that merchants were not necessarily racist even if they charged higher interest to black customers, since it was reasonable to assume blacks were more likely to default on credit given their social position (Williams, 1973). In the 1970s, hyper-concentration in the supermarket industry was blamed not just for high prices, but also for reducing the motivation for urban markets to provide a clean, well-maintained

shopping environment. As argued in the 1978 *Black Enterprise* article, “Let Them Eat Cake”: “Since food is a necessary commodity, the marketplace does not penalize for lack of productivity - in other words, no matter how badly run or badly stocked a store is, customers will still shop.”

Recently, Alkon and others have argued convincingly that poor households prioritize cost and quality when food shopping, rather than proximity, and employ a number of strategies to leave their neighborhoods for better grocery options (Alkon et al., 2013; Cannuscio et al., 2013; Shannon, 2016). Findings from the discourse analysis demonstrate how shoppers would leave inner city neighborhoods when able, but that some populations faced greater mobility challenges and therefore greater vulnerabilities to their neighborhood food landscape than others. When allegations were made against chain operations in the 1960s, one of the sources of evidence came from black domestic workers who shopped at chain supermarkets in white neighborhoods, which they found offered better quality food at lower prices than the same chain store in their neighborhood. They would often, therefore, do their own personal shopping nearby their employment in white neighborhoods instead of at their lower quality neighborhood store. Shoppers from the inner city used public transportation, ride sharing with friends and family, and informal “gypsy cabs” to access better quality groceries in other neighborhoods. Studies reviewed from the 1990s demonstrated that cities were losing millions of dollars in grocery sales to the suburbs.

Inner city shoppers were not entirely captive to their neighborhoods, yet transportations strategies came with associated costs. In the 1990s in New York City, the Community Food Resource Center estimated that local shoppers spent an additional \$400

to \$1,000 annually on transportation to grocery shopping outside their neighborhoods. Populations with limited mobility were considered particularly captive to the neighborhood marketplace, and so at increased risk of hunger or poor nutrition. Non-profit groups, such as the community development corporation led by Msgr. Linder in Newark, offered low- and no-cost shuttles from senior housing to full-service chain supermarkets to help protect the health of elderly urban residents. The lack of reliable transportation remains an important barrier to accessing high quality food retailers in the public health literature, and a site of programmatic and policy intervention among healthy food access advocates today (Coveney & O'Dwyer, 2009; Ver Ploeg, 2009; Zepeda, Reznickova, & Lohr, 2014).

Urban Development and Supermarkets: Neoliberal Solutions to Market Problems

It is in the 1990s that the supermarket access discourse begins to connect to the “food desert” discourse of today. Though segregation is acknowledged in the literature as an historical artifact that sorted black households into poor neighborhoods, poor supermarket access was (and is) widely explained by the industry, community food advocates, and public officials alike as a product of increasing urban poverty and the unviability of the urban marketplace. As the discourse analysis demonstrates, supermarket development strategies, much like today, were promoted as an important component of urban revitalization as much as it was promoted as a public health intervention. Food access advocates sought public-private partnerships with the industry and policymakers to make urban supermarket development attractive and feasible.

In general, parties to the supermarket policy discourse were aligned – the responsibility of the government was to assist the supermarket industry to overcome barriers to urban development (e.g. by lowering taxes, reducing regulations, providing market studies of the inner city, helping to assemble suitable lots, simplifying the permitting process). In return, the supermarket industry promised to be good neighbors – hiring from the local community, serving as an anchor tenant to attract more commercial activity to blighted areas, and meeting the nutritional needs of urban residents. Even the supermarket industry noted the shift in the tone of the public discourse, and the rehabilitation of their reputation in the city. Chain supermarkets, once seen as part of the problem of profiteering from the spatial isolation of poor urban communities, became an industry poised to help resurrect the declining city.

This evolution in blame and responsibility across the discourse tracks onto the ascendance of neoliberal beliefs among policymakers and the American public across the study time period. Though associated with the ideas of Reagan and Thatcher in the 1980s, neoliberal thought permeated the policies and approach to urban policy of the Clinton administration in the 1990s and lives on today (Weaver, 2016). Neoliberal theory promotes free markets, entrepreneurship, privatization, and public-private partnerships as the fair and effective ways to reduce poverty and promote economic growth (Hackworth, 2007). One such example would be the urban enterprise zones, enacted throughout the 1980s on the state level, and signed into federal law under the Clinton administration, which allocated tax exemptions and regulatory relief to specific urban neighborhoods to encourage economic development (Weaver, 2016). The problem of food access in the inner city would be treated as a market problem, and not surprisingly, its policy solutions

would be market-based. Real estate developers, supermarket industry representatives, and public officials would collaborate to direct corporate investment into targeted urban areas.

The ideas of Michael Porter, the Harvard Business School professor who argued that inner cities will be redeveloped by harnessing their competitive advantages in the free market, were particularly influential in the supermarket policy discourse between private capital, policymakers, and some food access advocates (Porter, 1995). An entire issue of the *Journal of Black Political Economy* was dedicated to discussing the premises embedded in Porter's thesis in 1995. One criticism was that Porter's thesis and prescriptions erased discriminatory racial history from its understanding of urban poverty, and its race-neutral policies solutions would fail to redistribute wealth fairly (America, 1995).

Moody and Sawicki challenged the idea that urban poverty can be addressed through place-based business strategies, the approach at the core of Porter's general thesis and the approach to supermarket redevelopment as an equitable food access strategy (1995). Critical geographer Jerry Shannon is particularly critical of how a place-based approach to "food deserts" may actually lead to gentrification of poor neighborhoods and displacement of vulnerable households to other under-resourced areas (Shannon, 2014). While new business development is touted for creating jobs in areas with high unemployment, social and ethnic networks may be more important than proximity in accessing new employment opportunities (Kasinitz & Rosenberg, 1993). In addition, studies have demonstrated that racial discrimination continues to limit access to employment for black and Hispanic job-seekers (Pager, 2003; Pager & Western, 2012). These limits to place-based anti-poverty or food access strategies are important, yet

understudied given the dominance of the ecological model in urban food access discourse and the general ascendancy of neoliberal beliefs.

Attendant to a place-based business approach is the retreat of direct government responsibility for social programs, in favor of market-based solutions (though with government interventions to facilitate market development, such as deregulation or tax abatements) (Sawicki & Moody, 1995). Scholars Alison Hope Alkon, Julie Guthman, and Jerry Shannon are critical of the tacit neoliberal approach embedded in the “food desert” discourse and attendant policy agenda (Alkon, 2013; Alkon & Mares, 2012; Guthman, 2008, 2009; Shannon, 2014). Alkon argued that neoliberal food policies are problematic because “they locate social change potential in consumer market behavior rather than collective action” and they “assume functions that were formerly provided by the state” (Alkon, 2013). Market-based solutions to disparities in food access have flourished, from farmers markets to chain supermarket development, at the same time that the federal government has withdrawn from direct food assistance, welfare, and housing programs. As Alkon argued, the ascendancy of the programmatic responses to food access disparities may further cement the belief that private, charitable, and entrepreneurial projects are more efficient and effective than government social programs (Alkon, 2013).

The clearest evidence for this argument may be found in the aftermath of the massive cuts to the Food Stamp program during the Reagan Administration. As documented in this thesis, the charitable and private sectors attempted to fill the gap created by federal retreat from food assistance programs through corporate donations, soup kitchens, and food pantries. Reagan’s 1984 Task Force on Food Assistance report lauded the shift away from a federal commitment to direct food assistance since, “the

private sector is often more efficient in meeting specialized or localized needs.” Food system pioneer Mark Winne recounted how the anti-hunger community responded to what was then viewed as an emergency situation, as non-profit organizations distributed meals and food, and lobbied the federal government for Good Samaritan laws to limit liability and encourage private sector donations (Winne, 2008). Winne quoted fellow Connecticut-based anti-hunger activist and Food Bank founder Mark Patton saying, “we are playing into Reagan’s hands by increasing private feeding activity while the federal government is doing all it can to shirk it’s responsibility” (Winne, 2008).

5-2 Significance for Public Health Policy and Research

Problem Definition and Public Health: The Power of Frames

Julie Guthman argued that obesity and food access research is a text-book case of problem closure, in which, “a specific definition of a problem is used to frame subsequent study of the problem’s causes and consequences in ways that preclude alternative conceptualizations” (Guthman, 2013). Guthman is referring to the influence of taken-for-granted assumptions that are embedded in the ways researchers and advocates frame the obesogenic environment thesis: among them, that neighborhood features cause obesity, that modifying those features will affect obesity rates, and that fatness is inherently problematic (Guthman, 2013). A troubling aspect of problem closure most relevant to the present study is that problems are typically framed in relation to the most socially acceptable policy interventions. John Kingdon has argued that the problems most likely to climb higher on the policy agenda are those with readymade and feasible policy

solutions attached to it, while problems with more complex causes and solutions are often ignored (Kingdon, 1984).

Stone's framework to analyze the strategic representation of policy narratives is one way to bring to the surface the conflicting assumptions about causes and solutions embedded in different problem definitions. She argues that stories of decline and stories of helplessness and control are particularly common in health and social policy political discourse. The "food desert" narrative is one example of the power of the decline narrative – it suggests that modern problems are the result of deterioration in the food environment of cities, which must be reversed. More generally, deterioration could refer to changes in the built environment or to those of morality and conduct. Obesity is often framed in the media as the result of a general culture of laziness that has grown in the past several decades, along with the attendant expansion of waistlines.

Stories that evoke helplessness and control move the problem from the "realm of fate" to the realm of human control – a problem that has been seen as natural or unavoidable is now framed as under human understanding and intervention. Social problems are often framed in public discourse as accidents of fate or the outcome of some natural system. Those who are blamed for creating social problems often retreat to the realm of fate in an attempt to construct the problem as essentially blameless. However, those looking to assign blame seek to move from the realm of fate to that of human action – and in doing so to identify who or what is responsible for solving the problem. Stone includes both conspiracy stories and blame-the-victim stories within this typology. In a conspiracy, a problem that appeared random or natural is framed as the product of deliberate human actions and choices.

Stories that “blame the victim” locate the creation of the problem within the behavior or values of the people suffering the problems themselves. Poverty and welfare are often framed in this way in public discourse – poor people are said to not have the social skills or cultural values to be successful in a modern economy, and so they are unable to escape the cycle of poverty (Stone, 1997). Stone identifies that liberals have a version of blaming the victim in which the problems of the poor or marginalized derive inadvertently from factors inherent to the victims themselves.

As demonstrated by this research, some policy narratives blamed the conditions of urban grocery on the knowledge and behaviors of inner city residents. A common policy solution throughout the discourse was better consumer education. In the 1960s, better consumer education was proposed as a way to protect poor households from exploitation in the marketplace. The Office of Economic Opportunity created grocery shopping training programs to help inner city housewives meal plan and buy the proper mix of grocery to last the month, so that they would not have to rely on credit when the money ran out. David Caplovitz supported consumer education as a good in and of itself, but argued that it could not be a solution to exploitation in the marketplace. He testified before Congress, “It is not a matter of people being educated; it is a matter of deceptive practices that need to be corrected.” In the 1970s, as supermarkets visibly abandoned the city and shuttered their doors, the behavior of inner city residents was implicated in supermarket flight. Bloom described the effects of crime on a market, and argued that the self-service model of supermarkets (wherein customers had access to the merchandise prior to paying) relied on a level of morality and regard for private property that may not exist in the inner city. Marion blamed the problems of the unviable urban environment on

both the “deficiencies in educational and cultural experiences” among the urban poor, as well as “racial discrimination and poverty.” In later decades, as health advocates expressed public concern about the effect of poor food access on hunger and nutrition, consumer education was again promoted as an answer to help shoppers successfully navigate their retail options. This point of view locates the solution in how consumers behave within their environments rather than in addressing the causes of inequality in the marketplace.

A central contradiction found within the policy narratives offered by supermarket industry representatives, food access advocates, and civil rights activists was the extent to which conditions of urban grocery could be explained by naturalistic forces or by human intent. In the words of Stone, whether the conditions are consigned to the “realm of fate” or the “realm of human control” (Stone, 1997). Supermarket representatives and marketing academics, such as Donald Marion and Gordon Bloom who produced studies for the supermarket industry, had a strong interest in explaining the conditions of the market for food as the product of naturalistic forces – supply and demand, demographic shifts, macroeconomic patterns, and so on. Industry lobbyist Clarence Adamy argued before a Congressional Committee on food prices in 1976 that the “real villain” behind the high cost of groceries was general inflation in the economy. Corporate representatives testified in 1967 at the Consumer Problems of the Poor hearings that any price discrepancies between chain locations in black and white neighborhoods could only be explained by unavoidable human error. Bloom analyzed the inner city “eco-culture” for signs of vibrancy or decay to explain whether supermarkets could survive. Supermarkets

did not just close inner city locations in favor of suburban development - they migrated like a flock of geese preparing for the winter.

In contrast, consumer and civil rights advocates placed the problems of urban supermarket conditions back into the realm of human control and agency. The accusations prominent in the 1960s against inner city supermarkets indicted the behaviors of store personnel and management in purposefully engaging in unethical and illegal behaviors. Cans were intentionally mislabeled or not marked down when there was a chain-wide sale. Bills were padded on the checkout line. Credit was offered at inflated and opaque rates. Stores in white neighborhoods would ship unsold and aging perishables to supermarkets in black neighborhoods. These allegations identify intentional acts, committed within human control, not accidents of fate.

The riot damage was also identified as selective and purposeful in many post-riot reports. The union leader writing about Detroit claimed that the stores that burned were those most “mercenary” in the community. In an analysis of the political consequences of the civil disturbances of the 1960s, James W. Button challenges the conservative position that black riots were irrational, apolitical, and ultimately pathological acts. Such a view assumes that existing institutions were capable of addressing the underlying causes of the disorders, and violence was counterproductive to those ends. A radical position characterized riots as a means for transforming unequal institutions that were resistant to change. Button demonstrated how the Johnson administration increased funding for socioeconomic programs in cities where riots occurred, though the public and policymakers ultimately took an increasingly conservative stance towards law and order issues in the following decade (Button, 1978).

Consumer and civil rights advocates, particularly before 1980, explained disparities in supermarket access as a product of human decisions, not naturalistic forces. The Public Advocates 1979 petition makes this point explicit – while the food crisis was similar in impact as a natural disaster, its authors argued, “Unlike a natural catastrophe, however, this emergency was humanly created and can be humanly solved.” With similar rhetoric, Rev. Jesse Jackson demanded the government address the slums as if they were a natural disaster, but reminded his Congressional audience the slums were the result of decisions to place “profits over persons.” In 1967, the Kerner Report condemned the ghetto as a place where “exploitative practices flourish,” and made the now famous assertion that, “white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions made it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it.” The market for groceries in the ghetto, therefore, cannot be dissociated from the policies of ghetto formation and an analysis of the interests that derived wealth and power from ghetto formation.

Whether conditions are constructed as a product of impersonal forces or human agency matters for policy development. If the inner city environment is unviable for supermarket operations and as a public we agree that better supermarket access will improve health and strengthen communities, it is reasonable to seek government intervention to broker entry into the inner city marketplace. Aid could take the form of land write-downs, tax abatements, or easing regulatory and permitting requirements. If, however, poor food access in the inner city is the result of discriminatory policies and behaviors, supermarket development might improve access to lower cost food, but it cannot address the root causes of inequality. In response to the Porter thesis of place-based business development, Richard America argued that the problem needed to be

redefined through a lens of restitution (America, 1995). Since black (and indigenous) wealth creation had been stymied in the interest of creating wealth for whites as a class, investment in minority business and inner city assistance would amount to reparations of ill-gotten gains (America, 1995). Throughout the discourse, even as black ownership was touted as a mainstream solution for the problem of poor food access in the inner city, black entrepreneurs reported access to credit as a major barrier to establishing a successful business. *Progressive Grocer* ran a 1992 article on the success of Greg Calhoun, who ultimately gained access to credit through a loan made to his corporate employer; as a successful supermarket owner he later sat on the board of two banks that had denied him a start-up loan.

In many forums throughout the discourse cooperative grocery stores were promoted (or criticized) as an alternative to relying on the mainstream corporate food industry. Co-operative solutions were discussed at the Consumer Problems of the Poor hearings, not just for their potential in providing good food at fair prices, but as a social venture. The same year, *Food Topics* magazine reported that grocery industry generally “pooh-poohed” the idea of co-operative ownership as impractical, and furthermore, grocery insiders were suspicious that the “true vista” behind co-operative solutions was rejecting white ownership of stores in black neighborhoods. Food co-operatives are community-owned and operated businesses that often serve to fill in gaps in the market created by discrimination and market failure (Novkovic, 2008). More than a business venture, co-operative enterprises aim to build community self-determination and promote democratic values. As Jessica Nembhard Gordon details in *Collective Courage: A History of African American Cooperative Economic Thought and Practice*, co-operatives

have been important vehicles for economic, social and human development in black communities (Gordon Nembhard, 2014).

Community control and self-determination are central to co-operative practice, especially for groups excluded from fair participation in the mainstream economy (Gordon Nembhard, 2014). In Bedford-Stuyvesant, a black financed, owned and operated grocery co-operative was organized in 1909, because, as a local paper reported, “there exists the need for a store where people of their race can purchase necessary articles of food at reasonable prices” (“Co-operative Grocery is Planned by Negroes,” 1909). In the same Brooklyn neighborhood more than a century later, another person of color-led co-operative grocery store is in the organizational phase. In addition to bringing high quality and affordable food to the neighborhood, the venture is a project of community self-determination and human capital development (“Central Brooklyn Food Coop,” 2016). Black business ownership (with fair access to commercial credit as a prerequisite) and co-operative ventures begin to address the underlying cause of food access disparities by building wealth and human capital.

Guthman argues that supply-side policy solutions, like supermarket development or designing bike lanes to encourage healthy behaviors, often gain traction because they are “imaginable interventions” and politically palatable (Guthman, 2013). Compared to developing policies to directly address racialized and gendered urban poverty, supply-side environmental interventions are both easier to imagine and more politically feasible. In addition, supply side policies are touted as both health intervention and community economic development strategy (Karpyn et al., 2010). This frame of the problem aligns

the interests of the corporate supermarket industry, capital venture firms, and public officials.

In the 1990s the collusion between the supermarket industry, capital, and public officials was easy to trace. Consider The Retail Initiative (TRI), launched with capital from among others, JP Morgan, by the Local Initiatives Support Coalition. On the TRI board sat Allan Bildner, president of the Food Marketing Institute's (FMI) Urban Initiatives Task Force. The National League of Cities, a lobby group for mayors and municipalities, adopted the same priorities of the Task Force to foster collaboration between city governments and the supermarket industry. Often, food access advocates like the Community Food Resource Center (CFRC) in New York City brokered the relationships between policymakers, financiers, and developers. JP Morgan, equity holder in TRI, partnered with the CFRC to host a working group among public officials and developers to coordinate supermarket development in New York.

As Guthman explains, the evidence is far from conclusive that supermarkets lead to healthier diets and lowered risk for chronic disease (Guthman, 2013). But a real danger of embracing supply-side interventions is not just that they won't work, but that they may limit the "politics of the possible" and distract energy from more transformative policy approaches. In his recollection of the charitable mobilization following extreme cuts to the Food Stamp program in the early 1980s, Winne explained in poignant detail about how organizers felt they were involved in a temporary stopgap measure to provide immediate relief to the hungry. He writes, the organizers "could not have foreseen that their work would permanently alter the way the general public – and the government at all levels – would address the food gap" (Winne, 2008). Engaging in the rewarding,

exhausting, and necessary immediate work of feeding hungry families entailed an “opportunity cost” that was not lost on organizers; rather than fight the policy of federal withdrawal that precipitated the hunger emergency, Winne argued that “the public lost sight of the need for fundamental change, and policymakers were left off the hook” (Winne, 2008).

Black Panther Party founder Huey Newton provided an illuminating analysis of the tension between emergency programs to address real and immediate human needs, and the commitment to transformative social change to address the root causes of those emergencies (Patel, 2011). In the late 1960s and early 1970s the Black Panther Party operated a breakfast program for schoolchildren so poor kids could begin their day with a full stomach (Holt-Giménez & Wang, 2011). Newton referred to this program and others aimed at immediate relief as “survival pending revolution”; survival programs were not “solutions” to their problems, but rather an entry point to “organize the community around a true analysis and understanding of their situation,” which could lead to transformative change (Patel, 2011). More so than consumer or nutrition education, The Black Panther Party advocated for political education and collective social action. The mainstream food movement could learn from these prior experiences in the food and social justice community to reimagine the purpose and ultimately the goals of programmatic and supply-side food access solutions (Slocum & Saldanha, 2013).

Reframing “Food Deserts”: The Rise of Food Sovereignty

Findings from the present study complicate the “food desert” paradigm for understanding and solving the problems of unequal food access in American cities. Like

Wilson's definition of the ghetto as concentrated poverty, "food deserts" are measured only in relation to class. As operationalized by the USDA, which directs funding from the Healthy Food Financing Initiative and other reinvestment programs, the construct can only identify low food access in relation to poverty/income and supermarket proximity. When unequal food access is understood primarily as a market failure of the supermarket industry in impoverished communities, there is little room to examine how race, capital, and public policy interact to create urban landscapes to the benefit of some and the burden of others. Furthermore, market and place-based policy responses may only serve to mitigate the harms of unfair systems, rather than dismantle them. As scholars have argued, place and market-based solutions may even actually cause harm, whether by leading to gentrification or foreclosing more transformative policies avenues. Additionally, supermarket development may not lead to more a resilient, equitable food system in the inner city – large corporate development may stifle new and close existing diverse, community owned food stores and leave neighborhoods vulnerable to supermarket departure.

Alkon identified four discursive strands found within the food movement and assessed the extent to which they may lead to transformative systems change (Alkon, 2013). Though local/organic foods, Community Food Security, food justice, and food sovereignty movements have much in common, Alkon and others argue that only food sovereignty opposes (rather than reproduces) neoliberalism (Alkon, 2013; Alkon & Agyeman, 2011; Alkon & Mares, 2012). Food sovereignty confronts the dominance of capital in the food system by calling for democratic control over food production and distribution, including land reform, access to seeds, and a rights-based discourse (Alkon,

2013). Rather than identify as consumers seeking expanded choices in the marketplace, food sovereignty constructs individuals as political citizens acting collectively to secure rights for workers, producers, and eaters. Food sovereignty provides a framework to analyze how inequalities are not evidence of a broken food system, but rather an outcome of a food system that is designed to create winners and losers (Holt-Giméénez & Wang, 2011).

“Food desert” advocacy is one strand of the food justice movement, which identifies the racial and socioeconomic inequalities in the ways the food is produced, distributed, and consumed (Alkon, 2013; Holt-Giméénez & Wang, 2011). The “food desert” frame is typically associated with policies that reproduce neoliberalism through its market-based solutions, which rely on entrepreneurship and consumer choices to effect social change. Some explicitly anti-racist food justice advocates prefer the term “food apartheid” as it identifies that inequality is not natural, but the product of structural racism in the food system (Holt-Giméénez & Wang, 2011). The present research findings challenge the naturalistic decline narrative within the “food desert” frame, and supports analyses, such as food sovereignty and food apartheid, that interrogate the role of race and capital in creating urban food landscapes today.

Reframing the “Obesity Epidemic”: Addressing Stigma

Unequal urban food access was a problem on the political agenda prior to either the “food desert” frame or the emergence of rising rates of obesity in the United States. On the one hand, this dissertation research demonstrates that there are many reasons why urban food access matters beyond its potential link to obesity – in the past, concerns

about exploitation in the marketplace and hunger in vulnerable households were much more prominent than concerns about diet-related chronic diseases. On the other hand, it brings into question how to understand the phenomenon of rising obesity if poor quality food landscapes in the inner city existed prior to rising rates of obesity. The present research suggests the value in examining assumptions embedded in the dominant narratives about why a problem exists and which policies are appropriate to solve it.

There actually already exists a wide literature, mostly from outside the field of public health and critical of the biomedical approach, that interrogates the meanings and consequences of obesity discourse and practice (Gard & Wright, 2005; Wright & Harwood, 2009a). This field of scholars are concerned not just with the premises of public health obesity discourse (i.e., the conflation of health and fat), but with its normative implications (Wright & Harwood, 2009a). There is particular concern about the stigmatization of women's bodies, obesity discourse as biopolitics and governance, and the association of thinness and morality (Colls & Evans, 2009; Guthman, 2011). Critical obesity scholars argue that stigma to fat people and assumptions about their moral fitness are indivisible in the US from other pernicious assumptions about class, race and gender (Firth, 2013; LeBesco, 2011). Writing about the "obesity epidemic," Jan Wright has argued that, "...nowhere is the divide between the bio-physical and medical sciences and socio-culturally informed research and theorizing more evident than around this issue" (Wright & Harwood, 2009a).

Mainstream public health research should engage with the existing discursive approaches to fatness to recognize the ways in which the public health approach to obesity may inadvertently cause harm to fat people and to women in particular. Feminist

scholar Talia Welsh argued that, “The war against obesity is very much a war fought on the bodies of poor women and their children” (Welsh, 2011). In the United States, it is only among women that there are significant disparities in the prevalence of obesity between racial and ethnic groups and across the class stratum – among men rates of obesity do not reflect the same social gradients (Flegal, Carroll, Kit, & Ogden, 2012; C. Ogden, Lamb, Carroll, & Flegal, 2010). Compare the age-adjusted disparities in overweight and obesity among black and white men in a nationally representative sample (69.2% and 71.4%) to that between black and white women (82.0% and 63.2% respectively) (C. L. Ogden, Carroll, Kit, & Flegal, 2014). Unlike men, women are significantly more likely to be obese if lower income and this class gradient holds within racial groups as well, though the gradient is steepest between white women of different income levels (Flegal et al., 2012; C. Ogden et al., 2010).

Obesity, therefore, is a gendered phenomenon that intersects with class and race-ethnicity in America, though this aspect is understudied and receives little attention in public discourse. Harm from the framing of the obesity “epidemic” is also gendered, as women and women of color bear a disproportionate burden of social stigma. Stigma has actually been promoted within the public health literature and by bioethicists as one way of motivating “healthier” eating and physical activity behaviors, similar to the use of stigma in anti-smoking campaigns (Mayes, 2015; Welsh, 2011). Yet there is ample evidence that stigma is harmful, particularly in the case of weight control, to girls and women (Mayes, 2015). Anorexia nervosa, an eating disorder that overwhelmingly afflicts girls and women, holds the highest mortality rate of any psychiatric condition – additionally the rate of suicide is 50 times higher than expected based on rates in the

general population (Park, 2007). Both correlational and experimental studies demonstrate bias against fat employees and jobseekers, and evidence suggests that fat women are most exposed to weight-based discrimination (Caliendo & Lee, 2013; Pager & Western, 2012; Vanhove & Gordon, 2014).

A historicized approach to obesity and environment research could contribute to a discourse that interrogates fatness as a reflection of unequal gendered and racialized social arrangements, rather than a product of undisciplined bodies. Further research on how gender intersects with race and class could help elucidate the social arrangements that produce disparate body sizes among poor women and women of color. Doing so may help reduce stigma, either as an anti-obesity strategy or as an unintended consequence of a narrow emphasis on fatness and its environmental antecedents.

Future Directions in Public Health Research and Policy

Murphy and Fafard make an explicit call for the use of discourse analysis by social epidemiologists (Murphy & Fafard, 2012). Recalling the policy analysis literature reviewed in Chapter 3, Murphy and Fafard distinguish between uncontroversial public health problems, , and controversial problems, which embed conflicting frames and competing human values (2012). The authors suggest that some clinical and health services issues are uncontroversial, as they often share a widely accepted problem definition and are amenable to technical or administrative solutions. Such a characterization may be an oversimplification, since what is an uncontroversial approach to clinical care in one era may be highly controversial in another. Yet, they make this distinction to emphasize that problems of health equity, a focus of social epidemiology,

are rarely uncontroversial. For this reason, Murphy and Fafard suggest the value of a discursive approach that can unearth the normative assumptions embedded within the problem definitions of health equity issues, and moreover, analyze which groups have the power and authority to dominate the discourse and to what interests (Murphy & Fafard, 2012).

Discourse analysis is appropriate for public health research, within and beyond the field of social epidemiology, because the problems of health equity are not only health problems, but also social, economic, and political problems. Complex problems call for interdisciplinary approaches – combining traditional epidemiologic methods and socio-historic approaches could begin to reframe health equity issues as manifestations of unjust political and social arrangements. Discourse analysis can be applied to problem definitions that undergird public health research across its concentrations, from the study of social and behavioral health to environmental health.

Perhaps it is nowhere more clearly useful than in the field of public health policy research. This approach has implications for public health policy development. First, it broadens problem definitions used in public health research and policy development by reexamining and redefining a problem's cause. In the case of the present research, a discursive approach to urban food access provided insight into how racism and capital have shaped the food landscape in America cities. This historicization of urban food access supports a food sovereignty frame today, which is explicitly concerned with community ownership, anti-racist practice, and challenging the role of capital in creating winners and losers in the present food system.

Second, this broadening in how public health problem are understood may allow for advocates to explicitly align their problems definitions with their policy solutions. For example, supermarket reinvestment policies are meant to address prior urban decline and disinvestment and spur economic development in American cities. Given the findings of this research and the insufficiency of the decline narrative to explain urban food retail inequalities today, it is not likely such a policy would affect the underlying causes that created food access inequalities. If supermarket scarcity in the inner city is a product of racist policies and practices, building new supermarkets cannot address those root causes. Policies of supermarket development could be reframed as a fix to the simpler problem of unmet community demand for supermarkets. It may not be as politically successful as a policy frame that promises to spur economic development and bring jobs to depressed urban economies, but it has a much better chance of achieving its goals. Additional policies, then, would be needed to address the political and social arrangements that generated and reproduce unequal access to quality food, and that also likely place communities at higher risk for chronic diet-related conditions – for example, the continued redlining of housing and commercial loans in black neighborhoods (Immergluck, 2004).

The implication here is that programmatic and place-based solutions to improve food access may need to readjust the expectations of the impacts the policies may have (as well as be critical of the harms they may engender). The “survival pending revolution” model is a good place to start – expanding food retail access, building community gardens, or expanding access to farmers markets may help meet currently unmet needs. They may provide employment and opportunities for community building. But ultimately,

they cannot transform the political economy of American cities and its racialized and gendered dimensions. As such, they should not be confused with solutions to those problems, even as they provide immediate relief to real unmet human needs. Ultimately, public health cannot address these underlying structural causes of poor health alone – since health inequities are social and political problems, they will require social and political answers. What may be most important for realizing these goals is to reject the neoliberal frame that social justice can be achieved through the marketplace and to rearticulate the role of the federal government in affirming and protecting the rights and welfare of its citizens.

5-3 Study Strengths and Limitations

This research fills an important gap in knowledge regarding the problem of unequal access to quality food at reasonable prices in the inner city through a novel mixed methods approach. There are several strengths of this research. First, there are few longitudinal studies that demonstrate how supermarket retail has changed over time in American cities. This study used retail data from Brooklyn, New York to document supermarket trends from 1970 to 2010, as well as an archival policy discourse analysis of nationwide documents produced between 1960 and 1999 about the politics of urban supermarket access.

Second, as a parallel mixed methods design, data collection and analysis of each method were concurrent and the findings from each were combined in the final interpretation. The discourse analysis compliments and elucidates the empirical findings

– supermarkets may have closed their urban locations, but those stores cannot be compared with the modern, efficient stores opened in the suburbs. This narrative matters for the interpretation of the supermarket flight narrative. In the “food desert” frame, the story of supermarket flight implied a decline in access to quality groceries for inner city residents over time. The present research demonstrates that from the 1960s through the 1990s inner city residents, particularly within predominantly black neighborhoods, consistently decried the quality and cost of the food available in their local marketplace. The story of supermarket access in the city for marginalized populations may be one of a continuing status quo, rather than a story of decline. The discourse analysis helps explain why stores closed and what efforts community groups, the industry, and policymakers made to improve food shopping conditions in the inner city, which could inform similar policy discourse today.

Additionally, in the existing “food desert” narrative supermarket flight is blamed primarily on increasing urban poverty, whereas the present research demonstrates both through the historical spatial analysis and policy discourse analysis that segregation and racial bias is as or more important for explaining the dearth of quality markets in black neighborhoods. The maps provide a way to visualize the spatial dimension of segregation, and help bring to life the arguments within the policy discourse that food merchants took advantage of the spatial isolation of black communities, created through racist real estate policies and practices. This use of multiple sources and multiple types of data improved the validity and credibility of the findings. Third, this research draws knowledge and methodological approaches from interdisciplinary fields.

Research limitations should be noted. Though an extensive search for archival documents was conducted, it is likely the search was not exhaustive. Particularly disappointing, the archives of the A&P Historical Society, documents related to the nation's first supermarket chain, were boxed for a move and inaccessible during data collection. I also was unable to track down an archive for the Community Nutrition Institute – a key food access advocacy group from the 1970s and 1980s. I made contact with the founder of the CNI, a former USDA official in the Kennedy Administration who was integral in developing the Women, Infants, and Children supplemental nutrition program, but the organization had shut its doors more than a decade prior and they did not maintain an archive.

There are more documents from the supermarket industry than from other political actors in the discourse (95 and 39, respectively). Many of the documents were uncovered in the Food Marketing Institute archive, the rest was found through online databases containing the archives of grocery trade publications. The industry was also given voice through the Congressional hearings. Not all FMI documents were solely from the perspective of the supermarket industry; the FMI archive did contain government records and reports from consumer advocacy organizations, as well. It was more difficult to uncover the narratives of everyday people. Community voices tended to be represented through consumer and civil rights advocacy groups, although they do not speak for a homogenous constituency. Future research would benefit from using methods such as ethnography and oral history to uncover the many voices and narratives of inner city residents, particularly those not involved with organized movements.

Also, the Dun & Bradstreet data were unfortunately lower quality than originally expected, based on conversations with representatives from the company. Often in the dataset, the largest supermarket corporations would only have the address of the headquarters and annual sales data for the entire company listed, rather than identify the address and sales volume of each branch in the chain. Particularly in the 1970s, sales volume and number of employees was largely missing from the dataset, leaving only name recognition to sort supermarkets from small grocery and convenience stores in the dataset. The A&P was missing from the Dun & Bradstreet data from 1970 entirely, yet it is known from local memory that there were many A&Ps in New York City in the 1970s. To supplement the incomplete Dun & Bradstreet data, and to improve validity, multiple sources of business data were used.

One approach was to identify additional business listings from the Yellow Pages. However, listings for the A&P were also missing in the Yellow Pages for 1970. Ultimately 96 supermarkets were added to the extended business list based on a 1966 public announcement of alcohol licenses in all Kings County A&P locations, which listed each address (Appendix D). It is not clear why the A&P was missing from these lists; the company was included in later lists in both the Yellow Pages and in the D&B business dataset. Appendix B presents all tables from the Results chapter with data from the original business list. The direction and significance of the relationships do not change when using the 1970 business list with or without the additional A&Ps, suggesting that the A&P stores were distributed across neighborhoods by socio-demographic characteristics similarly to the stores in the original list. Inclusion of the A&P data does not change the findings of the analysis for 1970.

The New York Public Library also had reverse Cole's directories and Dun & Bradstreet business directories, which were checked against the Dun & Bradstreet and Yellow Page lists. Every address in the database was visually checked using Google Street view – 34 additional stores were added to the list through this method. Obviously, the visual confirmation could only be made for the 2010 business list (Google street view often goes back to 2007). Every attempt was made to find the most valid business data, yet the lack of an authoritative list is a weakness in this study and speaks to the difficulty of doing historical grocery research. Future research about methods of finding and validating historical business lists would make a contribution to studies about how retail access has changed over time.

Finally, the empirical findings of supermarket trends in Brooklyn may not be transferable to other US cities, particularly those outside the former industrial centers of the Midwest and the Northeast. There is a large immigrant population in Brooklyn, which may make the setting unique compared to other American cities. Future research on historical supermarket trends should include the percent foreign-born and measures of the rate of neighborhood turnover to identify any relationships with retail trends over time, which was beyond the scope of the present research. There was, however, a decline in supermarkets across the study time period, as expected. Future research could examine the characteristics of the neighborhoods where supermarket flight occurred in other cities and compare findings to the present study.

5-4 Conclusions

This mixed methods historical research study may contribute to a food justice discourse that challenges assumptions in the mainstream food movement, particularly the “food desert” frame and resulting neoliberal policies. Findings demonstrate the role of racist structures and capital in creating prior and present day inequalities in the marketplace for food in the inner city. The “food desert” frame, with its emphasis on urban decline and market failure, is not adequate to explain and mobilize around transforming the food system and its unfair manifestations in urban America. This study may encourage other scholars to use discourse analysis and archival evidence to deconstruct the assumptions found in the dominant frames that govern other fields of public health inquiry, beyond the present subject matter. Such a method may initially complicate more than it clarifies, but may ultimately produce richer understandings of the problems in our midst and the policy implications of how we go about solving them.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Missing Data from the Dun & Bradstreet Business List

Table A.1 Supermarkets Missing Sales and Employment Data among Included Stores from the Dun & Bradstreet Database (1970-2010)

| | <u>1970</u> | <u>1980</u> | <u>1990</u> | <u>2000</u> | <u>2010</u> |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Total Included Supermarkets from D&B, (n) | 76 | 178 | 181 | 170 | 145 |
| Included Supermarkets Missing Employment Data, (n) | 17 | 8 | 14 | 4 | 5 |
| Missing (%), Included Supermarkets | 22.4% | 4.5% | 7.7% | 2.4% | 3.4% |
| Missing (%), All Stores in the D&B Dataset | 48.9% | 0.8% | 30.0% | 0.4% | 0.3% |
| Employment Data for Included Supermarkets | | | | | |
| Employees, mean | 15.3 | 16.3 | 31.6 | 32.1 | 36.8 |
| Employees, median | 12 | 12 | 20 | 20 | 20 |
| Min, Max | [1, 70] | [1, 100] | [1, 230] | [2, 250] | [2, 400] |

Appendix B: A&P List from the 1966 Brooklyn Daily Eagle

Figure B.1 Brooklyn Daily Eagle, List of A&P Locations

Page Sixteen

THE LEADER-OBSERVER

Thursday, July 7, 1966

Golfers Take Part in TWA Tour Of West

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Gaudier recently took part in a tour conducted by the Long Island Chapter of the American Society of Travel Agents. Mr. Gaudier has the Gaudier Travel Agency at 110-01 Jamaica Ave., Richmond Hill.

The AZTA tour was a Discovery America tour which took place in the vicinity of the TWA tour to San Francisco, Texas, Phoenix, San Jose, the Grand Canyon and Las Vegas.

**25 BONUS TRADING STAMPS
WITH THE PURCHASE OF
LIT HOUSE PERMANENT**

LEGGETT PHARMACY
8001 JAMAICA AVE.
WOODHAVEN

LEGAL NOTICES

Notice is hereby given that an order dated June 20, 1966 has been issued by the undersigned, after hearing the parties, in the matter of **JOHN DONALD LEE**, official number 30883 issued by **BERNARD PALLEY** of which **LEE** is the defendant. The order is to be changed to **K & C LEE** by **MICHAEL STAMMELLO, JR.**, Regional Commissioner of Customs.

Dy. S. 2500
ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL LAW
TRANSPORTATION SECTION
NEW YORK, N.Y.
Per 47-730 - 7/7, 1966

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT **ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL LAW** has been issued to the undersigned to sell beer at retail under the Alcoholic Beverage Control Law, at **100-06 11th Avenue, Queens Park, N.Y.**, Queens County, for off-premises consumption.

ARFAC LUBIN
100-06 11th Avenue, Queens Park, N.Y.
WOODHAVEN, N.Y.

BEER LICENSE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT **ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL LAW** has been issued to the undersigned to sell beer at wholesale under the Alcoholic Beverage Control Law, at **100-06 11th Avenue, Queens Park, N.Y.**, Queens County, for off-premises consumption.

LIBERTY BEER DISTRIBUTORS, INC.
100-06 11th Avenue, Queens Park, N.Y.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT **ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL LAW** has been issued to the undersigned to sell beer at retail under the Alcoholic Beverage Control Law, at **100-06 11th Avenue, Queens Park, N.Y.**, Queens County, for off-premises consumption.

FRANCIS M. SCHWARTZ
100-06 11th Avenue, Queens Park, N.Y.
WOODHAVEN, N.Y.

BEER LICENSE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT **ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL LAW** has been issued to the undersigned to sell beer at wholesale under the Alcoholic Beverage Control Law, at **100-06 11th Avenue, Queens Park, N.Y.**, Queens County, for off-premises consumption.

JOHN MARANT
100-06 11th Avenue, Queens Park, N.Y.

BEER LICENSE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT **ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL LAW** has been issued to the undersigned to sell beer at wholesale under the Alcoholic Beverage Control Law, at **100-06 11th Avenue, Queens Park, N.Y.**, Queens County, for off-premises consumption.

JOHN MARANT
100-06 11th Avenue, Queens Park, N.Y.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT **ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL LAW** has been issued to the undersigned to sell beer at wholesale under the Alcoholic Beverage Control Law, at **100-06 11th Avenue, Queens Park, N.Y.**, Queens County, for off-premises consumption.

JOHN MARANT
100-06 11th Avenue, Queens Park, N.Y.

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the following licensees have been issued the A & P Queens County stores to sell beer at retail under the Alcoholic Beverage Control Law for off-premises consumption. Period: July 1, 1966 to June 30, 1967.

405-04 12200 Street, Flushing 4 GB 445

100-02 Union Tpke., Flushing 4 GB 441

110-40 Springfield Blvd., Queens 4 GB 440

144-16 24th Street, Rosedale 4 GB 447

100-02 Union Tpke., Flushing 4 GB 441

110-40 Springfield Blvd., Queens 4 GB 440

144-16 24th Street, Rosedale 4 GB 447

100-02 Union Tpke., Flushing 4 GB 441

110-40 Springfield Blvd., Queens 4 GB 440

144-16 24th Street, Rosedale 4 GB 447

100-02 Union Tpke., Flushing 4 GB 441

110-40 Springfield Blvd., Queens 4 GB 440

144-16 24th Street, Rosedale 4 GB 447

100-02 Union Tpke., Flushing 4 GB 441

110-40 Springfield Blvd., Queens 4 GB 440

144-16 24th Street, Rosedale 4 GB 447

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Appendix C: Results Tables with Alternate Area Levels (Census Tract or ZCTA)

Table C.1: Characteristics of ZCTAs Included in the Analysis, by Decade: Brooklyn, New York (1970 - 2010)

| | 1970 | 1980 | 1990 | 2000 | 2010* |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Number of ZCTAs | 36 | 37 | 37 | 37 | 37 |
| Mean ZCTAs population | 71,893 | 60,051 | 61,915 | 66,403 | 66,590 |
| Mean population density | 22,925 | 19,856 | 20,753 | 21,341 | 21,063 |
| Majority white ZCTAs | 20,927 | 17,983 | 17,844 | 19,213 | 19,294 |
| Majority black ZCTAs | 28,916 | 23,152 | 24,602 | 23,465 | 21,751 |
| Persons living in poverty, mean (%) | 17.2 | 24.5 | 22.8 | 25.1 | 21.8 |
| (Q1, Q3) | (9.2, 24.7) | (13.8, 32.6) | (14.5, 32.1) | (18.7, 31.8) | (14.6, 28.0) |
| Majority white ZCTAs | 14.2 | 18.8 | 18.7 | 21.0 | 18.2 |
| Majority black ZCTAs | 26.3 | 33.3 | 27.5 | 27.5 | 24.0 |
| Median ZCTA household income, \$ | \$8,633 | \$14,321 | \$33,016 | \$43,103 | \$55,418 |
| (Q1, Q3) | (\$7,077, \$10,373) | (\$12,372, \$17,184) | (\$25,787, \$40,015) | (\$37,044, \$50,784) | (\$47,623, \$70,259) |
| Total racial/ethnic composition, % | | | | | |
| Majority white ZCTAs | 75.0 | 62.2 | 56.8 | 48.6 | 45.9 |
| Majority black ZCTAs | 25.0 | 29.7 | 32.4 | 35.1 | 32.4 |
| No majority ZCTAs | 0 | 8.1 | 10.8 | 16.2 | 0.21 |
| Foreign-born persons, mean (%) | 17.9 | 23.0 | 28.0 | 36.1 | 36.0 |
| (Q1, Q3) | (13.3, 21.8) | (17.2, 27.3) | (22.1, 33.8) | (27.1, 45.8) | (26.4, 45.1) |
| Majority white ZCTAs | 19.1 | 23.1 | 27.6 | 36.4 | 35.5 |
| Majority black ZCTAs | 14.3 | 25.1 | 29.4 | 34.7 | 37.2 |

* 2010 data are based on the 2006-2010 American Community Survey, whereas the data from 1970 to 2000 derive from the Decennial Census.

Table C.2: Persons per Supermarket, by ZCTA characteristics: 1970-2010

| | 1970 | 1980 | 1990 | 2000 | 2010 |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Total | 8475 | 9485 | 12287 | 14362 | 13999 |
| Majority black tracts | 9042 | 8206 | 11,063 | 14,185 | 13,920 |
| Stand. Error | (936.36) | (671.11) | (1374.5) | (2151.39) | (2349.83) |
| Majority white tracts | 8286 | 8963 | 10,861 | 14,014 | 14,868 |
| Stand. Error | (1292.74) | (696.21) | (1165.73) | (1984.83) | (2158.66) |
| p-value | 0.747 | 0.501 | 0.914 | 0.954 | 0.772 |
| High poverty tracts ($\geq 20\%$) | 12,156 | 9,264 | 13,654 | 14,453 | 13,920 |
| Stand. Error | (2398.59) | (1222.21) | (1798.64) | (1774.96) | (2081.01) |
| Low poverty tracts ($< 20\%$) | 6,395 | 9809 | 10,844 | 14,174 | 14,092 |
| Standard Error | (363.66) | (906.45) | (1302.19) | (1777.92) | (1329.66) |
| <i>p-value</i> | <i>0.0037</i> | 0.745 | 0.203 | 0.923 | 0.947 |

Table C.3: Changes in Number of Supermarkets by tract characteristics: 1970 to 2010

| | 1970 to 1980 | 1980 to 1990 | 1990 to 2000 | 2000 to 2010 |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Tracts, number | 741 | 743 | 743 | 744 |
| Majority white | -0.13 | -0.06 | -0.04 | -0.011 |
| Not majority non-white | -0.11 | -0.04 | -0.01 | 0.005 |
| p-value | 0.705 | 0.543 | 0.214 | 0.45 |
| Majority black | -0.13 | -0.046 | -0.035 | 0.003 |
| Not majority black | -0.11 | -0.063 | -0.031 | -0.007 |
| p-value | 0.718 | 0.608 | 0.862 | 0.654 |
| Predominantly white ($\geq 80\%$) | -0.125 | -0.083 | -0.042 | 0.006 |
| Not predominantly white ($< 80\%$) | -0.134 | -0.035 | -0.026 | -0.005 |
| p-value | 0.854 | 0.123 | 0.562 | 0.67 |
| Predominantly black ($\geq 80\%$) | -0.055 | -0.023 | -0.045 | 0.006 |
| Not predominantly black ($< 80\%$) | -0.134 | -0.065 | -0.029 | -0.005 |
| p-value | 0.341 | 0.293 | 0.619 | 0.669 |
| Higher poverty | -0.14 | -0.05 | 0.015 | 0.00 |
| Lower poverty | -0.12 | -0.06 | -0.069 | -0.006 |
| p-value | 0.714 | 0.671 | 0.0012* | 0.786 |
| Below median income | -0.16 | -0.05 | -0.003 | 0.002 |
| Above median income | -0.09 | -0.06 | -0.017 | -0.008 |
| p-value | 0.122 | 0.797 | 0.023* | 0.623 |

Appendix D: Results Tables Using Original Supermarket Dataset

Table D.1: Persons per Supermarket, by tract characteristics: 1970-2010 (Original Data)

| | 1970 | 1980 | 1990 | 2000 | 2010 |
|--------------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Total Persons per Supermarket | 3,484 | 3,075 | 3,327 | 3,532 | 3,536 |
| Majority black tracts | 4,544 | 3,399 | 3,834 | 3,819 | 3,523 |
| Stand. Error | (265.73) | (170.16) | (191.34) | (206.65) | (192.66) |
| Majority white tracts | 3,223 | 2,839 | 2,934 | 3,134 | 3,327 |
| Stand. Error | (102.61) | (118.09) | (131.15) | (167.77) | (173.45) |
| p-value | <0.001 | 0.007 | <0.001 | 0.010 | 0.449 |
| Predominantly black ($\geq 80\%$) | 5,114 | 3,508 | 3,780 | 3,906 | 3,858 |
| Stand. Error | (329.32) | (191.15) | (214.04) | (286.69) | (283.21) |
| Predominantly white ($\geq 80\%$) | 3,171 | 2,817 | 2,832 | 3,069 | 3,413 |
| Stand. Error | (110.05) | (123.07) | (160.66) | (220.63) | (288.36) |
| p-value | <0.001 | 0.002 | <0.001 | 0.023 | 0.275 |
| High-poverty tracts ($\geq 20\%$) | 4,274 | 3,420 | 3,632 | 3,848 | 3,908 |
| Stand. Error | (243.18) | (131.78) | (168.29) | (165.56) | (180.22) |
| Low-poverty tracts ($< 20\%$) | 3,234 | 2,759 | 3,124 | 3,014 | 3,169 |
| Stand. Error | (105.80) | (133.57) | (141.89) | (161.20) | (142.91) |
| p-value | <0.001 | <0.001 | 0.023 | <0.001 | 0.002 |
| Higher-poverty majority black tracts | 5,081 | 3,447 | 3,803 | 4,136 | 3,777 |
| Stand. Error | (335.03) | (186.15) | (222.29) | (260.73) | (260.88) |
| Lower-poverty majority black tracts | 3,629 | 3,225 | 3,874 | 3,034 | 3,104 |
| Stand. Error | (345.43) | (414.47) | (334.29) | (240.49) | (258.01) |
| p-value | 0.007 | 0.594 | 0.849 | 0.015 | 0.091 |
| Higher-poverty majority white tracts | 3,407 | 3,234 | 3,218 | 3,237 | 3,680 |
| Stand. Error | (271.71) | (196.57) | (340.03) | (269.72) | (370.01) |
| Lower-poverty majority white tracts | 3,192 | 2,697 | 2,861 | 3,059 | 3,181 |
| Stand. Error | (110.97) | (142.03) | (139.91) | (215.27) | (190.34) |
| p-value | 0.462 | 0.044 | 0.277 | 0.604 | 0.193 |

Note: P-value using a two-sided independent group t-test.

Table D.2: Persons per Supermarket, by ZCTA characteristics: 1970-2010 (Original Data)

| | 1970 | 1980 | 1990 | 2000 | 2010 |
|-------------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Total Persons per Supermarket, ZCTA | 8,475 | 10,373 | 13,136 | 15,801 | 17,598 |
| Majority black tracts | 9,042 | 8,625 | 11,575 | 16,153 | 17,263 |
| Stand. Error | (936.36) | (608.10) | (1,326.93) | (2,353.98) | (2,845.29) |
| Majority white tracts | 8,286 | 9,998.90 | 11,798 | 15,550 | 18,200 |
| Stand. Error | (1292.74) | (900.13) | (1,351.61) | (2,448.23) | (2,561.29) |
| p-value | 0.746 | 0.325 | 0.914 | 0.865 | 0.811 |
| High poverty tracts ($\geq 20\%$) | 12,156 | 10,503 | 14,438 | 15,248 | 16,813 |
| Stand. Error | (2,398.59) | (1,346.54) | (1,688.33) | (1,739.63) | (2,083.45) |
| Low poverty tracts ($< 20\%$) | 6,394 | 10,183 | 11,763 | 16,954 | 18,521 |
| Standard Error | (363.66) | (920.41) | (1550.53) | (3,049.68) | (2,442.36) |
| p-value | 0.004 | 0.860 | 0.253 | 0.606 | 0.596 |

Table D.3: Changes in Number of Supermarkets per census tract and ZCTA, by decade (Original Data)

| | 1970 to 1980 | 1980 to 1990 | 1990 to 2000 | 2000 to 2010 |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Census Tracts, # | 741 | 743 | 743 | 744 |
| Mean Change in Supermarkets per Tract | -0.08 | -0.30 | -0.25 | -0.26 |
| Min, Max | [-2,3] | [-2, 2] | [-2, 2] | [-2, 1] |
| Tracts losing supermarkets, # | 102 | 87 | 63 | 48 |
| Tracts gaining supermarkets, # | 91 | 48 | 39 | 29 |
| Tracts with no change, # | 548 | 608 | 641 | 667 |
| ZCTAs, # | 36 | 37 | 37 | 37 |
| Mean Change in Supermarkets per ZCTA | -0.48 | -1.48 | -0.83 | -0.78 |
| Min, Max | [-6, 6] | [-6, 3] | [-5, 3] | [-3, 1] |
| ZCTAs losing supermarkets, # | 18 | 20 | 19 | 17 |
| ZCTAs gaining supermarkets, # | 13 | 9 | 10 | 4 |
| ZCTAs with no change, # | 5 | 8 | 8 | 16 |

Table D.4: Changes in Number of Supermarkets by ZCTA characteristics: 1970 to 2010
(Original Data)

| | 1970 to 1980 | 1980 to 1990 | 1990 to 2000 | 2000 to 2010 |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| ZCTAs, number | 31 | 29 | 29 | 21 |
| Majority white | -0.79 | -1.89 | -1.00 | -1.38 |
| Not majority white | 0.57 | -0.73 | -0.64 | -0.38 |
| p-value | 0.269 | 0.247 | 0.648 | 0.055 |
| Majority black | 0.57 | -0.67 | -1.09 | 0.00 |
| Not majority black | -0.79 | -1.80 | -0.67 | -1.40 |
| p-value | 0.269 | 0.283 | 0.599 | 0.010 |
| Predominantly white ($\geq 80\%$) | -1.05 | -2.56 | -1.13 | --* |
| Not predominantly white ($< 80\%$) | 0.55 | -0.95 | -0.71 | |
| p-value | 0.135 | 0.124 | 0.639 | |
| Predominantly black ($\geq 80\%$) | --* | -1.00 | -1.57 | 0.00 |
| Not predominantly black ($< 80\%$) | | -1.57 | -0.59 | -1.10 |
| p-value | | 0.642 | 0.279 | 0.217 |
| Higher-poverty ($\geq 20\%$) | 1.40 | -1.13 | 0.15 | -0.83 |
| Lower-poverty ($< 20\%$) | -1.38 | -1.85 | -1.63 | -1.22 |
| p-value | 0.008 | 0.465 | 0.017 | 0.470 |
| Below median income | 0.87 | -0.87 | -0.23 | -1.00 |
| Above median income | -1.75 | -2.07 | -1.31 | -1.00 |
| p-value | 0.007 | 0.215 | 0.162 | 1.00 |

Note: P-value using a two-sided independent group t-test.

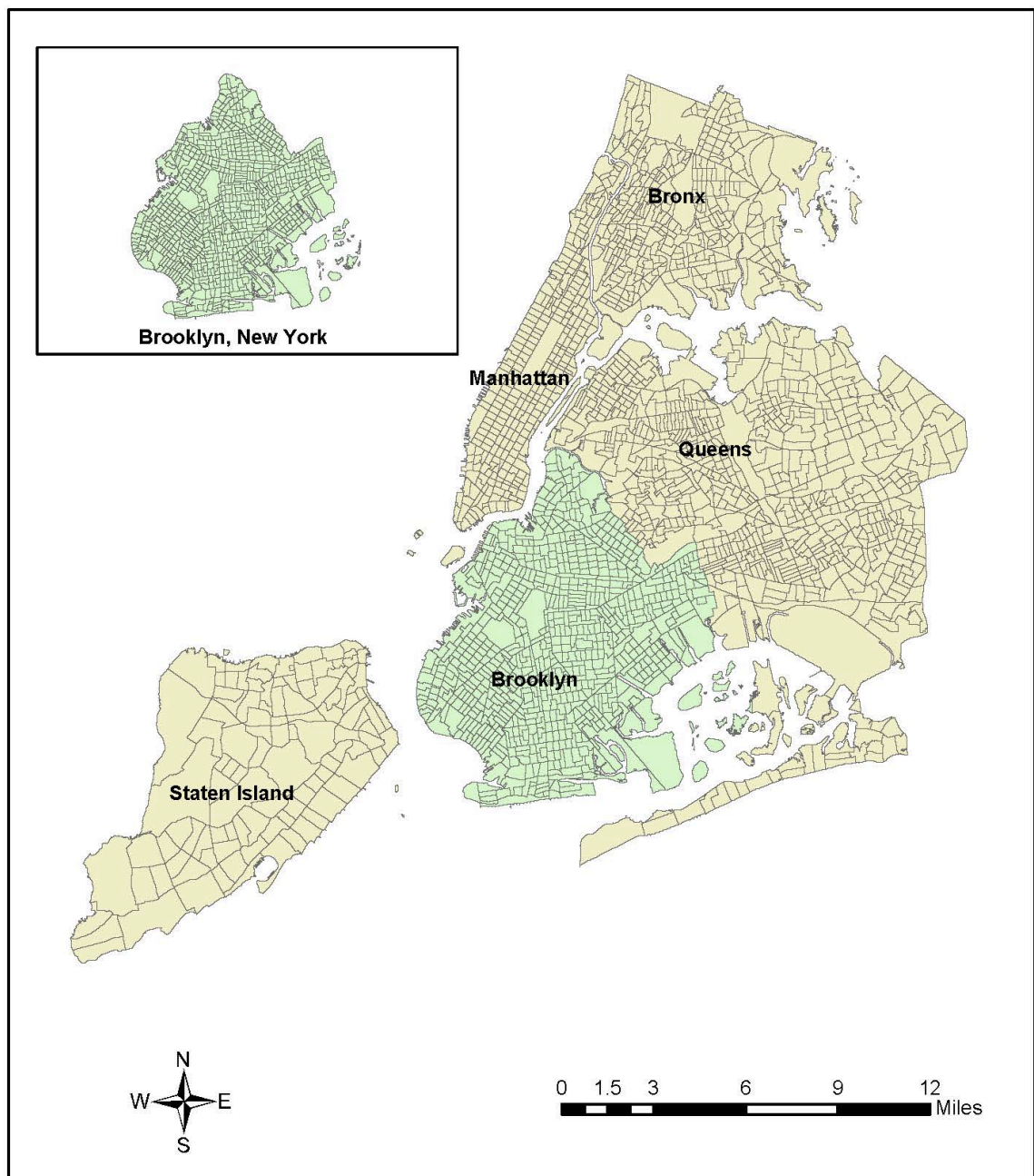
* Not enough data to make the comparison

Table D.5: Changes in Number of Supermarkets by tract characteristics: 1970 to 2010
(Original Data)

| | 1970 to 1980 | 1980 to 1990 | 1990 to 2000 | 2000 to 2010 |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Tracts, number | 193 | 135 | 102 | 77 |
| Majority white | -0.12 | -0.33 | -0.37 | -0.38 |
| Majority non-white | 0.10 | -0.26 | -0.12 | -0.16 |
| p-value | 0.274 | 0.725 | 0.208 | 0.338 |
| Majority black | 0.10 | -0.26 | -0.32 | -0.03 |
| Majority non-black | -0.12 | -0.32 | -0.19 | -0.41 |
| p-value | 0.274 | 0.756 | 0.561 | 0.099 |
| Predominantly white ($\geq 80\%$) | -0.14 | -0.42 | -0.38 | -0.23 |
| Predominantly non-white ($< 80\%$) | 0.05 | -0.21 | -0.19 | -0.27 |
| p-value | 0.301 | 0.241 | 0.405 | 0.909 |
| Predominantly black ($\geq 80\%$) | 0.27 | -0.12 | -0.60 | 0.18 |
| Predominantly non-black ($< 80\%$) | -0.11 | -0.35 | -0.13 | -0.38 |
| p-value | 0.228 | 0.332 | 0.045 | 0.039 |
| Higher poverty | 0.02 | -0.24 | 0.07 | -0.22 |
| Lower poverty | -0.12 | -0.38 | -0.58 | -0.33 |
| p-value | 0.462 | 0.454 | 0.001 | 0.635 |
| Below median income | -0.05 | -0.29 | -0.03 | -0.22 |
| Above median income | -0.11 | -0.32 | -0.53 | -0.32 |
| p-value | 0.722 | 0.898 | 0.013 | 0.651 |

Appendix E: Reference Map

Figure E.1 Reference Map: New York City and its Five Boroughs



Appendix F: Bibliography of Documents in the Policy Discourse Analysis

Table F.1 Bibliography of Documents in the Policy Discourse Analysis

| | Year | Title | Publisher | Source |
|-----|------|--|--|--|
| 1. | 1964 | Dolling Up Downtown | Business Week | FMI Archive |
| 2. | 1964 | Giant Eagle: City Locations are Fine | Supermarket News | FMI Archive |
| 3. | 1965 | Revival of Urban Interest Under Way | Supermarket News | FMI Archive |
| 4. | 1967 | The Inner City | Food Topics | FMI Archive |
| 5. | 1967 | The Revolution of Rising Expectations: The Ghetto's Challenge to American Business | FTC Mary Gardiner Jones | FMI Archive |
| 6. | 1968 | Consumer Problems of the Poor: Supermarket Operations in Low- Income Areas and the Federal Response | House Committee on Government Operations | FMI Archive & ProQuest Congressional |
| 7. | 1970 | New Supermarket in Riot Torn Watts Pays Off Handsomely | Supermarket Management | FMI Archive |
| 8. | 1970 | Safeway Dual Pricing Left Up to Consumer | Supermarket News | FMI Archive |
| 9. | 1971 | Ghetto Retailing: An Entrepreneurial Dilemma | A.E. Spitz | FMI Archive |
| 10. | 1971 | Black Enterprise: The Philadelphia Experience | Daniel J. McLaughlin | FMI Archive |
| 11. | 1972 | Philadelphia's Solutions to Low Income Urban Retailing | Daniel J. McLaughlin | FMI Archive |
| 12. | 1972 | Operating Stores in Problem Areas | Nargus Reports | FMI Archive |
| 13. | 1972 | How to Survive (and Thrive) in the Inner-City Market | Point-of-Purchase Advertising Institute | FMI Archive |
| 14. | 1972 | Managing a Super Market in a Low- Income Community | Supermarket News | FMI Archive |
| 15. | 1973 | Grocery Shopping in the Inner City | Consumer | FMI Archive |
| 16. | 1973 | Groceries in the Ghetto | Donald E. Sexton, Jr. | FMI Archive |
| 17. | 1974 | Food Sales Mix and Profitability: Ghetto Supermarkets Revisited | Donald E. Sexton, Jr. | FMI Archive |
| 18. | 1974 | The Dilemma of Inner-City Grocery Shopping | Donald F. Dixon & Daniel J. McLaughlin, Jr. | FMI Archive |
| 19. | 1974 | Food Retailing in Low-Income Areas: An Economic Analysis | U. Mass Cooperative Extension Service | FMI Archive |
| 20. | 1975 | Statement by Joseph B. Danzansky, President, Giant Food Inc., Before the D.C. City Council | Joseph B. Danzansky | FMI Archive |
| 21. | 1976 | Who's Going to Feed America's Inner Cities? | Chain Store Age | FMI Archive |
| 22. | 1976 | Letter Announcing the 'Food System in the City' Conference | Community Nutrition Institute | FMI Archive |
| 23. | 1976 | Why Supermarkets Flee Inner-City Neighborhoods | Community Nutrition Institute | FMI Archive |
| 24. | 1976 | Serving the Difficult to Serve Inner City Stores | Donald R. Marion | FMI Archive |

| | Year | Title | Publisher | Source |
|-----|-------------|--|--------------------------------------|---------------|
| 25. | 1976 | Food Distribution System, Inner City, U.S.A. | Jarvis L. Cain | FMI Archive |
| 26. | 1976 | Food Retailing 1966-1976 | Kenneth Farrell | FMI Archive |
| 27. | 1976 | Inner City Supermarket Study Results Announced | Super Market Institute | FMI Archive |
| 28. | 1976 | Do Markets Have a Future in Inner City? Parley Debate | Supermarket News | FMI Archive |
| 29. | 1976 | Gristede's N.Y. Keeps Affluent Image | Supermarket News | FMI Archive |
| 30. | 1976 | Inner City Shopping Choices Narrow as Urban Decay Spreads in Capitol | Supermarket News | FMI Archive |
| 31. | 1977 | Factors Contributing to the Exodus of Food Chains from the Inner City | Donald R. Marion | FMI Archive |
| 32. | 1977 | Supermarkets in the City | Donald R. Marion | FMI Archive |
| 33. | 1977 | A Positive Approach to the Problem of Inner City Food Distribution | Gordon F. Bloom | FMI Archive |
| 34. | 1977 | The City Eco-culture and the Market | Gordon F. Bloom | FMI Archive |
| 35. | 1977 | Community-Owned, Chain-Managed Supermarkets Solve Some Major Inner-City Store Problems | Supermarketing | FMI Archive |
| 36. | 1977 | Insurance Costs 70% More for Inner-City Stores | Supermarketing | FMI Archive |
| 37. | 1978 | Saving Downtown: Government Courts Retailers | Chain Store Age Executive | FMI Archive |
| 38. | 1978 | Four Guys Fight the Four Horsemen | Progressive Grocer | FMI Archive |
| 39. | 1978 | Inner City Supers: Is There a Future? | Progressive Grocer | FMI Archive |
| 40. | 1979 | Pathmark Opens Inner-City Super | Chain Store Age | FMI Archive |
| 41. | 1979 | Building a Lifeline To Ghetto Super Markets | Progressive Grocer | FMI Archive |
| 42. | 1980 | Detroit Groups Aid Inner-City Food Stores | Community Nutrition Institute | FMI Archive |
| 43. | 1980 | Pathmark's Inner City Gamble is Succeeding | Grocers Spotlight | FMI Archive |
| 44. | 1980 | Unique' Problems Affect Low-Income Area Stores | Modern Grocer | FMI Archive |
| 45. | 1981 | Feature: Food Retailing for the Inner City | Community Nutrition Institute | FMI Archive |
| 46. | 1982 | Food Marketing Alternatives for the Inner City | Community Nutrition Institute | FMI Archive |
| 47. | 1983 | Focus on the Food Markets | Cornell Cooperative Extension | FMI Archive |
| 48. | 1983 | Inner City, Minority Market Remains Untapped by Mfgs. | Modern Grocer | FMI Archive |
| 49. | 1986 | Hearing on the Hunger Relief Act of 1986 | Joint Hearing before the US Congress | FMI Archive |
| 50. | 1984 | The Poor Pay More: Food Shopping in Hartford | Hartford Food System | FMI Archive |
| 51. | 1984 | Supermarkets Return to the City Centres They Once Abandoned | Supermarketing | FMI Archive |
| 52. | 1985 | Inner-city Centers Integrate Public | Chain Store Age Executive | FMI Archive |

| | Year | Title | Publisher | Source |
|-----|-------------|--|---|--------------------------------------|
| | | Service and Profits | | |
| 53. | 1985 | FRAC Survey Finds Actual Food Prices Greatly Exceed Maximum Food Stamps Allotments in Eight Metropolitan Areas | Food Research Action Center | FMI Archive |
| 54. | 1985 | Urban Revival: New Life for City Supers | Progressive Grocer | FMI Archive |
| 55. | 1988 | Obtaining Food: Shopping Constraints on the Poor | Report of the Select Committee on Hunger, U.S. House of Representatives | FMI Archive |
| 56. | 1991 | The Poor Pay More for Less | NYC Department of Consumer Affairs | FMI Archive |
| 57. | 1992 | FMI Business Week 1992 A Ticket Out of the Inner City | Business Week | FMI Archive |
| 58. | 1992 | Enterprise Zones: Do They Really Work? | Business Week | FMI Archive |
| 59. | 1992 | Risk-Takers: Patsy Brown | Business Week | FMI Archive |
| 60. | 1992 | Are Minorities Neglected? Riots Put New Slant on Old Question | Chain Store Age Executive | FMI Archive |
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| 66. | 1992 | Von's Commits to Rebuild Program | The Von's Company | FMI Archive |
| 67. | 1992 | The Urban Grocery Gap | Select Committee on Hunger US House of Representatives | FMI Archive & ProQuest Congressional |
| 68. | 1993 | Supermarkets Move Back to Inner Cities | Advertising Age | FMI Archive |
| 69. | 1993 | Consumer Advocates Recognize Supermarket Ventures in Inner City Neighborhoods | FMI Issues Bulletin | FMI Archive |
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| 76. | 1994 | Inner City Welcomes Retailers | Latino Merchant | FMI Archive |
| 77. | 1994 | Rediscovering the Inner City | Marketing News | FMI Archive |
| 78. | 1994 | Public Voice Launches Campaign to Expand Inner City Food Options | Public Voice Advocacy Update | FMI Archive |
| 79. | 1995 | Winning Back Our Cities | Center for Retailing Studies | FMI Archive |
| 80. | 1995 | Supermarkets in Inner Cities -- New Community Partnerships and Programs | FMI Annual Convention | FMI Archive |
| 81. | 1995 | Initiative's Struggle Highlight Obstacles to Urban Supermarkets | Management | FMI Archive |
| 82. | 1995 | No Place to Shop: The Lack of Supermarkets in Low-income Neighborhoods | Public Voice for Food and Health Policy | FMI Archive |
| 83. | 1995 | Food Marketing Policy Issue Paper | Ronald W. Cotterill & Andrew W. Franklin | FMI Archive |
| 84. | 1995 | \$24M Fund to Build City Supermarkets | The LISC Link | FMI Archive |
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| 86. | nd | What is the Local Initiatives Support Corporation? | Local Initiatives Support Corporation | FMI Archive |
| 87. | 1972 | Google BE Jun 1972 Blacks Take Over Chains | Black Enterprise | Google Books |
| 88. | 1975 | Google BE June 1975 A View From the Top | Black Enterprise | Google Books |
| 89. | 1976 | Google BE Aug 1976 Burden of a Dream | Black Enterprise | Google Books |
| 90. | 1978 | Google BE July 1978 Eat Stale Cake | Black Enterprise | Google Books |
| 91. | 1980 | The Changing Tradition - Grocer | Black Enterprise | ProQuest Central |
| 92. | 1994 | The Birth of the Bed-Stuy Restoration Supermarket Corp. | Black Enterprise | ProQuest Central |
| 93. | 1999 | Supermarket Blackout | Black Enterprise | ProQuest Central |
| 94. | 1984 | President's Task Force on Food Assistance | Joint Committee Hearing of the House of Representatives and the Senate | ProQuest Congressional |
| 95. | 1969 | Nutrition and Human Needs | Hearings Before the Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs, US Senate | ProQuest Congressional |
| 96. | 1974 | Food Retailing and Processing Practices | Subcommittee on Consumer Economics of the Joint Economic Committee | ProQuest Congressional |
| 97. | 1975 | Federal Food Programs | Hearings Before the Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs of the United States Senate | ProQuest Congressional |

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| 98. | 1975 | 1975 Food Price Study | Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs of the United States Senate | ProQuest Congressional |
| 99. | 1976 | The Role of the Small Businessman | Hearing before the Subcommittee on Small Business of the Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs, United States Senate | ProQuest Congressional |
| 100. | 1976 | Food Stamp Program | Hearings before the Committee on Agriculture, House of Representatives | ProQuest Congressional |
| 101. | 1976 | Hearings 1976 National Food Marketing Commission | Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Agricultural Production, Marketing, and Stabilization of Prices of the Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, United States Senate | ProQuest Congressional |
| 102. | 1978 | Hearings 1978 Consumer Nutrition Education | Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Domestic Marketing, Consumer Relations, and Nutrition of the Committee on Agriculture, House of Representatives | ProQuest Congressional |
| 103. | 1983 | Problems of Hunger and Malnutrition | Hearings before the Subcommittee on Domestic Marketing, Consumer Relations, and Nutrition of the Committee on Agriculture, House of Representatives | ProQuest Congressional |
| 104. | 1984 | Accessibility and Effectiveness of Anti-hunger Programs | Hearings Before the Select Committee on Hunger, House of Representatives | ProQuest Congressional |
| 105. | 1988 | Hunger in America: The Federal Response | Hearings before the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry | ProQuest Congressional |
| 106. | 1989 | Food Security and Methods of Assessing Hunger in the US | Hearing Before the Select Committee on Hunger, House of Representatives | ProQuest Congressional |
| 107. | 1993 | Ensure adequate access to retail food stores by recipients of food stamps and to maintain the integrity of the food stamp program | Hearing before the Subcommittee on Department Operations and Nutrition of the Committee on Agriculture, House of Representatives | ProQuest Congressional |
| 108. | 1991 | Making it Work in the Inner City | Progressive Grocer | ProQuest Central |
| 109. | 1991 | Reaching out to Minorities | Progressive Grocer | ProQuest Central |
| 110. | 1992 | Combining Good Business and Good Works | Progressive Grocer | ProQuest Central |

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| 111. | 1992 | Pride and Prejudice | Progressive Grocer | ProQuest Central |
| 112. | 1993 | Myths of the Inner City | Progressive Grocer | ProQuest Central |
| 113. | 1993 | Rising from Ashes | Progressive Grocer | ProQuest Central |
| 114. | 1993 | 'There Was Tension in the Air' | Progressive Grocer | ProQuest Central |
| 115. | 1995 | Back to Cities | Progressive Grocer | ProQuest Central |
| 116. | 1995 | Supermarket as Social Symbol | Supermarket Business | ProQuest Central |
| 117. | 1995 | Pathmark Gets OK | Progressive Grocer | ProQuest Central |
| 118. | 1995 | Is Money Colorblind? | Progressive Grocer | ProQuest Central |
| 119. | 1996 | A Cultural Happening | Progressive Grocer | ProQuest Central |
| 120. | 1996 | Diversity in Action | Progressive Grocer | ProQuest Central |
| 121. | 1996 | A Model of Urban Pride | Supermarket Business | ProQuest Central |
| 122. | 1997 | Residents Retailers Return to Chicago | Chain Store Age | ProQuest Central |
| 123. | 1997 | Supermarkets Urban Growth | Chain Store Age | ProQuest Central |
| 124. | 1997 | Listening to Consumers Voices | Progressive Grocer | ProQuest Central |
| 125. | 1997 | Lowell's Little Acre | Progressive Grocer | ProQuest Central |
| 126. | 1997 | Whose Welfare is Threatened? | Progressive Grocer | ProQuest Central |
| 127. | 1998 | Inner City Opportunity Knocks | Chain Store Age | ProQuest Central |
| 128. | 1999 | Taking Root Harlem Pathmark | Progressive Grocer | ProQuest Central |
| 129. | 1999 | Urban Renewal | Progressive Grocer | ProQuest Central |
| 130. | 1999 | Inner City Markets | Supermarket Business | ProQuest Central |
| 131. | 1964 | Case Study of a Riot: The Philadelphia Story | Lenora E. Berson | ProQuest History Vault |
| 132. | 1967 | Kerner Commission field team trip and interviews in Newark, New Jersey, October 1967 | Records of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders | ProQuest History Vault |
| 133. | 1967 | Hearings of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders | Records of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders | ProQuest History Vault |
| 134. | 1968 | Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders - "The Kerner Report" | Records of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders | ProQuest History Vault |
| 135. | 1968 | Detroit: Notes on a Guerilla Uprising | Progressive Labor | ProQuest History Vault |
| 136. | 1979 | An administrative petition to the: | Public Advocates | ProQuest |

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| | President of the United States, et al. Re: Immediate Executive action to alleviate the nationwide inner city food crisis | | History Vault |

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CURRICULUM VITAE

KARINA MAREN CHRISTIANSEN

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Date of Birth: October 19th, 1985

Place of Birth: Somers, New York

EDUCATION

- 2016 (exp.)** **The Johns Hopkins University**, Baltimore, MD
PhD, Bloomberg School of Public Health
Department of Health Policy and Management, Program in Health and Public Policy
Concentration in Health and Social Policy
Certificate in Health Disparities and Health Inequality
Dissertation Title: Reframing “Food Deserts”: The History of Urban Supermarket Access and Its Public Policy Discourse
- 2011** Master of Public Policy
Johns Hopkins University
- 2007** Bachelor of Arts, History Loyola University Maryland Magna cum laude

RESEARCH AND PRACTICE EXPERIENCE

Bloomberg School of Public Health, Johns Hopkins University **2011-2016**
Doctoral candidate. The primary aim of my dissertation is to document the national public policy discourse on urban supermarket access since the 1960s. The discursive policy analysis examines the evolution in problem definition, assignment of blame and responsibility, and the design of policy solutions across interest groups and time periods (1960 to 1999). A secondary aim of the dissertation is to test whether “food desert” conditions are new, or rather are a systemic feature of urban life for the poor and for communities of color. To answer this question, I conducted a geospatial analysis of historical supermarket locations using a case study of Brooklyn, New York, with data from 1970 to 2010. Advisor: Dr. Keshia Pollack

The Health Situation Room, The Brooklyn Hospital Center, Brooklyn, NY **2015**
Conducted qualitative research and geospatial analysis for a population health analytics team within the hospital. Contributed to studies on the neighborhood determinants of hospital readmissions for key chronic diseases. Principal Investigator: Dr. Jean Ford.

Center for a Livable Future, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD **2012-2014**

Graduate research assistant on the Farming for the Future project. Responsible for writing evidence-based science policy briefs on topics related to human health and its relationship to sustainable farming practices, as well as federal policy interventions to improve access and affordability of healthy foods for low-income Americans.

Office of Sustainability, Baltimore City Department of Planning, Baltimore MD 2012-2013

Interned with the Baltimore City Food Policy Initiative (BFPI) under the leadership of Holly Freishtat, Baltimore City Food Policy Director. Provided research and policy writing expertise on the Food Desert Retail Strategy, BPFI's comprehensive plan to incentivize healthy food retail development in Baltimore neighborhoods with limited access to healthy and affordable food. Wrote policy documents such as briefs, memos, letters and reports for internal and public dissemination.

Center for Human Nutrition, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD 2010-2012

Field researcher on a multi-level community based obesity and diabetes prevention trial for American Indians (OPREVENT study) located in the rural northern Midwest. Conducted formative research in preparation of the study, including in-depth interviews and focus groups with community leaders and tribal members, hosted community workshops for participant feedback and validation, presented research plans to the tribal councils for approval. Developed and piloted survey instruments, trained local data collectors, and managed the implementation of baseline data collection. Performed qualitative data analysis for reports and peer-reviewed journal articles. Principal Investigator: Joel Gittelsohn.

Center for Human Nutrition, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD 2007-2010

Coordinated implementation of Baltimore Healthy Eating Zones (BHEZ). Managed baseline data collection for BHEZ, developed data collection instruments, conducted baseline surveys, trained graduate student research assistants and new staff on data collection instruments. Represented the study to community stakeholders and policymakers. Wrote grant narrative reports. Lead interventionist for the Baltimore Healthy Stores (BHS) study, a feasibility trial that aimed to modify the food environment in low-income neighborhoods and improve diet. Conducted interactive education sessions in corner stores and supermarkets. Worked with storeowners and wholesale food distributors to increase the stocking of healthier food items in participating food outlets. Principal Investigator: Joel Gittelsohn.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Teaching Assistant, Bloomberg School of Public Health, Johns Hopkins University

Politics of Health Policy (2013-2014)
Public Health Practice (2013-2015)
Public Health and the Law (2014-2016)

AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Brown Scholar in Community Health Fellowship | 2011-2016 |
| Center for Qualitative Studies in Health & Medicine Dissertation Enhancement Grant | 2015 |
| Center for a Livable Future-Lerner Fellowship | 2013-2015 |
| Kolvenbach Social Justice Summer Research Grant | 2007 |

PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

PEER REVIEWED ARTICLES:

1. **Christiansen, K.**, Gadhoke, P., Pardilla, M., Gittelsohn, J. (2016). Work, Worksites, and Wellbeing among North American Indian Women: A Qualitative Study. *Ethnicity & Health* (under review).
2. **Christiansen, K.**, Zivari, D., Sam, T., Ong, K., Ford, J. (2016). Using Focus Groups to Understand How Internal Medicine Residents in a Community Hospital Perceive the Quality of their Learning Environment. *Target Journal: Academic Medicine: Journal of the Association of Medical Colleges* (in preparation).
3. Gadhoke, P., Chiu, D., **Christiansen, K.**, Chase, R., Pardilla, M., Gittelsohn, J. Development of a culturally relevant and sensitive questionnaire for a multilevel adult obesity prevention intervention trial in North American Indian communities. *Ecology of Food and Nutrition*. (under review).
4. Roberts, E., Fleischhacker, S., Pardilla, M., Treuth, M., Gadhoke, P., **Christiansen, K.**, & Gittelsohn, J. (2015) Self-reported physical activity among American Indian adults from two diverse regions. *Journal of Rural Health*. doi: 10.1111/jrh.12168. [Epub ahead of print].
5. Gadhoke, P., **Christiansen, K.**, Swartz, J., & Gittelsohn, J. (2015). “Cause it’s family talking to you”: Children acting as change agents for adult food and physical activity behaviors in American Indian households in the upper Midwestern United States. *Childhood*, 22(3), 346-361.
6. Gadhoke P., **Christiansen K.**, Pardilla M., Frick K., Gittelsohn J. (2014). ‘We’re changing our ways’: Women’s coping strategies for obesity risk-reducing behaviors in American Indian households. *Ecology of Food and Nutrition*, 54(6), 583-602.
7. Kolahdooz, F.; Butler, J.L.; **Christiansen, K.**; Diette, G.B.; Breyse, P.N.; Hansel, N.N.; McCormack, M.C.; Sheehy, T.; Gittelsohn, J.; Sharma, S. (2015). Food and nutrient intake in African American children and adolescents aged 5 to 16 years in Baltimore City. *Journal of the American College of Nutrition*, 9, 1–12.
8. **Christiansen, K. M.**, Qureshi, F., Schaible, A., Park, S., & Gittelsohn, J. (2013). Environmental factors that impact the eating behaviors of low-income African American adolescents in Baltimore city. *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, 45(6), 652-660.
9. Gittelsohn J; Dennisuk LA; **Christiansen K**; Bhimani R; Johnson A; Alexander E; Lee M; Lee SH; Rowan M; Coutinho AJ. (2013). Development and implementation of Baltimore Healthy Eating Zones: A youth-targeted intervention to improve the urban food environment. *Health Education Research*, 28(4), 732-744.

10. Kramer RF, Coutinho AJ, Vaeth E, **Christiansen K**, Suratkar S, Gittelsohn J. (2012) Healthier home food preparation methods and youth and caregiver psychosocial factors are associated with lower BMI in African American youth. *Journal of Nutrition*, 142(5), 948-954.
11. Dennisuk LA, Coutinho AJ, Suratkar S, Surkan P, **Christiansen K**, Riley M, Anliker JA, Sharma S, Gittelsohn J. Food expenditures and food purchasing among low-income urban African-American youth. (2011) *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 40(6), pp. 625-628.
12. Surkan PJ, Coutinho AJ, **Christiansen K**, Dennisuk LA, Suratkar S, Mead E, Sharma S, Gittelsohn J. (2010) Healthy food purchasing among African American youth, associations with child gender, adult caregiver characteristics and the home food environment. *Public Health Nutrition*, 14, 670-677.

PRESENTATIONS:

1. **Christiansen K**. A Discursive Approach to Understanding the “Problem” of Inner City Supermarkets, 1960-2000. ASFS/AFHVS/CAFS Annual Conference. University of Toronto, Scarborough. June 24, 2016.
2. Mavronicolas HA, Chemparathy NJ, Kapp DA, Ru M, **Christiansen K**, Torres AZ, Ford JG. Application of Area-level Data to Hospital-based Population Health Management. 13th International Conference on Urban Health. San Francisco, CA. April 2016.
3. **Christiansen K**. The Racialization of Urban Grocery: A Case Study of Brooklyn, New York, 1960 to Present. Conference paper presented at Moral Cultures of Food: Access, Production, and Consumption, Past and Present, held at the University of North Texas. April 3, 2015.
4. **Christiansen K**. “The Political History of Food Retail in Brooklyn, New York: 1960 – Present” Paper presented at Johns Hopkins University graduate student conference; “Race and Racism in Comparative Perspective” May 2, 2014.
5. Gadhoke P, **Christiansen K**, Pardilla M, Frick K, and Gittelsohn J, “‘We’re changing our ways’: Gender and intra-family dynamics in the adaptation of food and physical activity behaviors in four American Indian/Alaska Native communities,” Paper presentation at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Chicago, Illinois, November 20-24, 2013.
6. Gadhoke P, **Christiansen K**, Pardilla M, Frick K, and Gittelsohn J, “‘We’re changing our ways’: Gender and intra-family dynamics in the adaptation of food and physical activity behaviors in four American Indian/Alaska Native communities,” Paper presentation at the annual meeting of the American Public Health Association, Boston, Massachusetts, November 2-6, 2013.
7. **Christiansen K**. Public Comment submitted to the Federal Registrar. Food and Nutrition Service Listening Session on SNAP Retailer Request for Information. Enoch Pratt Central Library, Baltimore, MD. September 9, 2013.
8. **Christiansen K**, Rowan M “The Baltimore Healthy Eating Zones (BHEZ) Study.” Invited to present the experience of our corner store intervention, BHEZ to the Lieutenant Governor of Maryland, Anthony Brown. Baltimore MD, September 21, 2010.

9. **Christiansen K**, Gadhoke P “Application of the OPREVENT research study to the Hannahville Indian Community Tribal Council for approval.” Presented the OPRVENT study to the Tribal Council seeking a Tribal resolution to approve collaboration on the research grant, a USDA funded study through the Bloomberg School of Public Health. Wilson, Michigan. July 6, 2010.

CONFERENCE POSTERS:

1. **Christiansen K**, Rowan M “The Baltimore Healthy Stores Projects and Policy Recommendations” Presented a poster at the Maryland Food Policy Summit. Annapolis, MD September 22, 2010.
2. **Christiansen K**, Qureshi F, Schaible A, Coutinho A, Dennisuk L, Rowan M, Park S, Surkan P, Gittelsohn J (2010) Influence of the built and social environment on adolescent eating behaviors in Baltimore City: Findings from the Baltimore Healthy Eating Zones study. The FASEB Journal, v. 25:973.5.
3. Lwin J, Dennisuk L, Martins P, Sharma S, Shin A, Coutinho A, **Christiansen K**, Yong R, Rowan M, Gittelsohn J. (2010). Impact of Baltimore Healthy Eating Zones Study on Psychosocial Factors among African American Caregivers. The FASEB Journal 25:973.8
4. Dennisuk L, Lee SH, Rowan M, Suratkar S, **Christiansen K**, Sharma S, Gittelsohn J (2010) Food environment around recreation centers in low-income neighborhoods of Baltimore City. The FASEB Journal, v. 24: 558.16

SKILLS

Data Analysis Software: STATA, Atlas.ti, MaxQDA
Spatial Analysis and Mapping Software: ArcGIS
Microsoft Office Suite: Word, Excel, PowerPoint
U.S. Citizen, Fluent English, Conversational Italian